



Youth gangs and social impacts: The co-relationship between gang culture and drug abuse among youth in Colombo city

Wijewardhana BVN

Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Sri Jaywardenepura, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Gangs are apparently not a new occurrence, but they are still a problem that has to be addressed. Youth gangs have become one of the most serious crime problems in most of the developed countries as well as countries such as Sri Lanka. Gang violence and behavior including substance use, homicides and assaults, drive-by shootings and brutal home-invasion robberies--accounts for one of the largest, single, personal threats to public safety. There is a great deal of variability in gangs, gang activity, and gang problems. Gangs vary by ethnic makeup, involvement in predatory crime, drug-related activities, and age of members, propensity toward violence, and organizational stability and unity. Even for a single factor such as drug trafficking, there is variation among gangs in the types of drugs sold, the aggressiveness used in expanding drug markets, and the willingness to use violence. These variations exist within and among different communities. This study seek to identify Drug abuse among youth gangs and its social impacts in Colombo city. 493 youth were identified (age range 18-32) 4 through snowball sampling and data gathered from questioners, observations, interviews and case studies. Findings said their drug related subcultural characteristics and how those impact to the society.

Keywords: culture, drugs, gang, male, social impact, urban

1. Introduction

Youth male gang is a social problem in the world owing to their anti-social behavior. It is notable every and all most member of gangs are addicting with drugs and they are involving with drugs related economic activities too. This situation has being become a contemporary issue in the world especially in urban social structure. Sri Lanka as the developing country is facing gang related illegal activities and those activities are negatively impact for the development of the country. Mainly they have highlighted owing their drug usage and drug related activities. The group formation of urban male gangsters is influenced by multiple factors that include their social setting as well as collective psychological behavior. Albert K. Cohen (1964) ^[1] in his research on delinquent boys, the culture of the gang, attempts to formulate and to solve certain neglected problems. Urban gangs are consisted by youth representing different social, economic and cultural mishmash. Living in slums and shanties or unauthorized settlements or those living at the road side inclusive families inherited within low income settings and those without education due to lack of necessary support or happened to be dropped out from schools are collective features of them. Furthermore, youths, those who have spent their childhood within acrimonious family settings, those who happened to grow up in families involved in criminal acts, those who have migrated to the city for various purposes and those who re-entered community after imprisonment etc. are consisted in the gangs. In addition, youths spent their childhood as street children are also included this category. In general, the 'gang' is a notable social entity which is endowed with distinguishable social factors and with equal interests and

also within the age limits from 18 – 32 years. As in the way the term 'Gang' is identified in this study, it is a social unit consisted with group of youths with in age of 18 – 32 years and operating in a sub-culture and a value system controlled by an culture-established leadership, operating within a demarcated geography, in possession of direct or indirect ownership of public physical assets and having involved in delinquent actions which are supportive measure of their livelihood. The term 'ganging', could be defined as 'a process of formation of a group of youth with equal interests, within similar age categories and involving in various actions collectively'.

The urban youth joined in gangs represent their origination in Colombo in different forms such as, those born in Colombo, owing to marriages, in connection to their employment, and also followed by land purchase as well as being unauthorized dwellers. Some of the youths assert that their native place is Colombo city but, it is only a psychologically driven ownership however, they have been originated in Colombo being street kids, mother / father became unauthorized residents or similar occurrences. Due to the fact that their birth certificate carry name of a hospital in Colombo as place of birth the said psychological assertion get further affirmed. In sum, "youth who grow up in more disorganized neighborhoods; who come from impoverished, distressed families; who do poorly in school and have low attachment to school and teachers; who associate with delinquent peers; and engage in various forms of problem behaviors are at increased risk for becoming gang members"(Decker, S. H., and Van Winkle, B. 1996. Through this research paper mainly focuses to study and analyses why youth make gangs or built gang

membership for do their drug related behavior and what kind of behavioral patterns do they maintain through gangs. The number of cities and countries including Sri Lanka experiencing youth gang problem increased substantially between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s. Conducting research based on Colombo city on Gangs, their behavior, impact on civil community and to explore possible ways to socialize those intending to join gangs found essential. The link between youth and criminal gangs is well documented in contemporary society, with media reports and government initiatives both reflecting the perceived problem that youth joined in criminal gangs pose to society. Literature studied revealed, in criminological point of view that many youth see themselves as making a rational choice in deciding to join a gang: Also revealed that socio-economic issues including hindrances caused them in their childhood are major factors affecting them to involve in large variety of criminal acts such as drug trafficking, attacks and homicides. Literature studied revealed practical ways to socialize gangsters, through preventive measures such as accepting them as another group of civilians with skills while strengthening community settings to create positive living environment, while also streamlining the legal processes. When the settings in Colombo is concern, it is important to note, as some of the theories imply, that different economic predictors may operate in entirely different ways; thus, the causal mechanisms that link each to crime may differ. Conflict theories focus on the brutalization of the lower class and the contradictions of capitalism A community with an emerging youth gang problem is not alone. Many small cities, towns, and rural areas are experiencing gang problems for the first time. In some communities, officials jump to the conclusion that gangs are present because local youth display gang symbols (such as the colors and hand signs of big-city gangs), but these conclusions can be mistaken because these actions alone do not necessarily signify a genuine gang problem.

2. Literature Review

There is a considerable amount of published and unpublished studies relating to Youth Ganging and their behavioral aspects have covered mainly on European context. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the theoretical and academic related aspects regarding youth ganging including the drug related behavior vs. characteristics of gang members. Nevertheless, it is a fact that no consequential studies carried out on youth related criminological features in particular in Colombo city or Sri Lanka. Reviewed Literature is mainly from United States and several European countries except those very few on Asian countries and Sri Lanka in particular. This literature review aims to examine the theoretical and academic related aspects regarding youth ganging including the behavior vs. characteristics of gang members.

According to literature there is no single, universally/generally accepted definition for “gang”, Sociologists, Criminologists do agree on common features of gangs, based on the type of activities they engaged in. State and local jurisdictions tend to develop their own definitions. According to the Webster 9th New Dictionary, “Group of people with a common purpose who joined for various reasons, including illegal activities and tend to display antisocial behavior against the rest of society”

(Webster 9th New Dictionary). (I.e. group of persons working together, a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends). Thrasher (1927) ^[7] defined gang as, “an interested group originally formed spontaneously and then integrated through conflict and characterized by meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning. The behavior develops a tradition unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, group awareness and attachment to a territory” (Thrasher 1927) ^[7]. Walter B. Miller defined a gang as “a self-formed association of peers bound together by mutual interest. A gang has an identifiable leadership; well develop lines of authority, and other organizational features who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose of purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activities and control over particular territory, facility or type of enterprise (Miller 1980) ^[4]. Definition of gang subjects to variations based on the parameters such as time, culture, society etc.

When go through the previous literature, the reasons for youth to join in Gangs is concerned, mixed nature of analytical expressions are published through literature in Europe as well as in few Asian countries. Among Asian studies Wijewardhana (1996) views joining youth gangs as consisting of both pulls and pushes. Pulls pertain to the attractiveness of the gang. According to social psychologists this process called group cohesiveness. Gang membership can enhance prestige or status among friends (Cohen 1964) ^[1], especially girls (for boys) (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996) ^[2], and provide opportunities to be with them. Gangs provide other attractive opportunities such as the chance for excitement by selling drugs and making money (Wijewardhana 2015) ^[9]. Thus, many youth see themselves as making a rational choice in deciding to join a gang: They see personal advantages to gang membership (Jankowski, 1991). Social, economic, and cultural forces push many adolescents in the direction of gangs. Protection from other gangs and perceived general well-being are key factors (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996) ^[2]. As noted above, some researchers contend that the “underclass” (Wilson, 1987) status of minority youth serves to push them into gangs (Moore, 1978) ^[3]. Silva and Athukorala (1991) ^[6] illustrates that higher school dropout rate, ethnicity and impact of communal riots happened in different time gaps in recent past and week social organizational setting are acceptable factors to illustrate impact of lifestyle of slum and shanty dwellers which contributes for youth to involve in criminal activities. The question of that ‘is it easy to quit a gang having being a member for some time’? Researchers have found that short term served members can leave gangs without facing serious consequences, yet the core members have to face with greater difficulty (Moover 1978). The typical situation is those people in the city experience considerable number of anti-social acts and crimes encountered by criminal gangs. Following the said predicament a large number of families in Colombo and in all other countries, live in aggravation. Most of the literature in the field of juvenile delinquency is concerned with the question: Why does this or that boy become delinquent? Cohen’s study argued gangs of boys doing things together: sitting on curbs, standing on the corner, going to the movies, playing ball, smashing windows and going robbery. These

things they do are not the simultaneous expression and magical coincidence so many discrete impulses, each with his own history, each fully understandable apart from the others. They are joint activities, deriving their meaning and flavor from the fact of togetherness and governed by a set of common understandings, common sentiments, and common loyalties (Cohen, 1964) ^[1]. William Foote Whyte (1960) ^[14] on the other hand in his study of street corner society has explained the younger generation has built up its own society relatively independent of the influence of its elders. Whyte has tried to see how youth male gang organize the activities of their own groups, and then, to place those groups in the social structure. Not only Whyte and Cohen, urban male ganging and its impact on the society has being widely studied by academics, researchers, scholars from different fields such as sociology, socio-psychology, criminology and behavioral science on different perspectives at the global context.

However, so far, except this authors study on The Impact of Urban Youth Ganging on Anti-Social Behavior: A Criminological Study in Colombo City of Sri Lanka. Wijewardhana, (2015) ^[9], there is no serious research or survey had being conducted on youth male gang behavior in Sri Lanka's urban settings. The gangs and their activities are being widely discussed in general by the public media and the people in Sri Lanka recently because of the rapid and significant increase of the crimes and gang activities. In fact, the male youth gangs have become a very critical social issue in Sri Lanka now as it is believed to be contributing in increasing crimes, introducing new crime patterns, as well as deviant behavior & gang delinquency causing negative impacts to the wellbeing of the general public (fear of crimes,

feeling of social insecurity, threats & violence). Hence this research paper makes an attempt to address the gap of literature of ganging and their drug related addiction and social impacts.

3. Research problem

What are the major determinants that determine collective group formation in the urban setting in Sri Lanka? Is the criminal group behavior a continuation of their past and present group activities in other forms? What factors lead them to engage in delinquent activities? What kind of interrelationship do youth gang have with Drug related activities? Does the drug addiction male gang behavior have social implications and repercussion? So, the proposed study intends to examine the social impact of the antisocial behavior of urban male gangs.

4. Objectives

- To study the drug related addictions of urban youth male gangsters
- To identify how they use gang membership for their portion and life style
- To study the behavioral patterns of drug addiction urban male gangsters to identify the intervention measures so as to prevent the ganging and to provide a framework for utilizing urban male gangsters as a human resource in urban social development.

5. Methodology

The below mentioned chart indicates the process adopted in relation to the research.

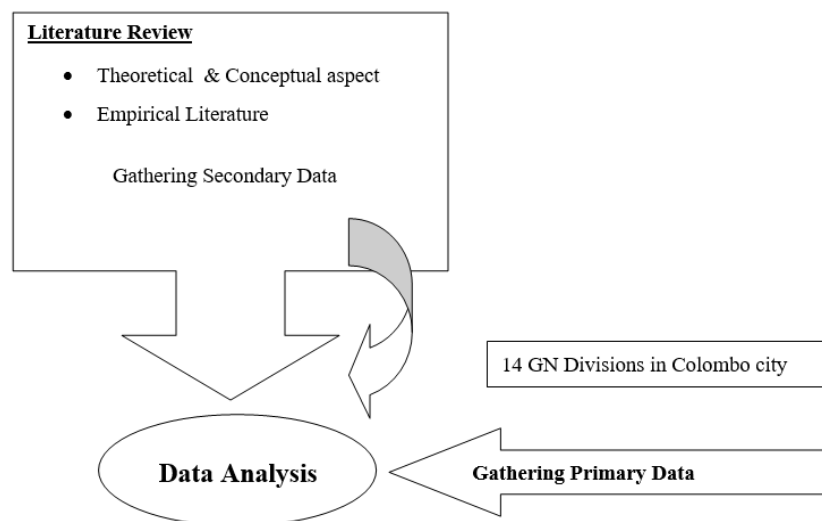


Fig 1: Methodical Approach

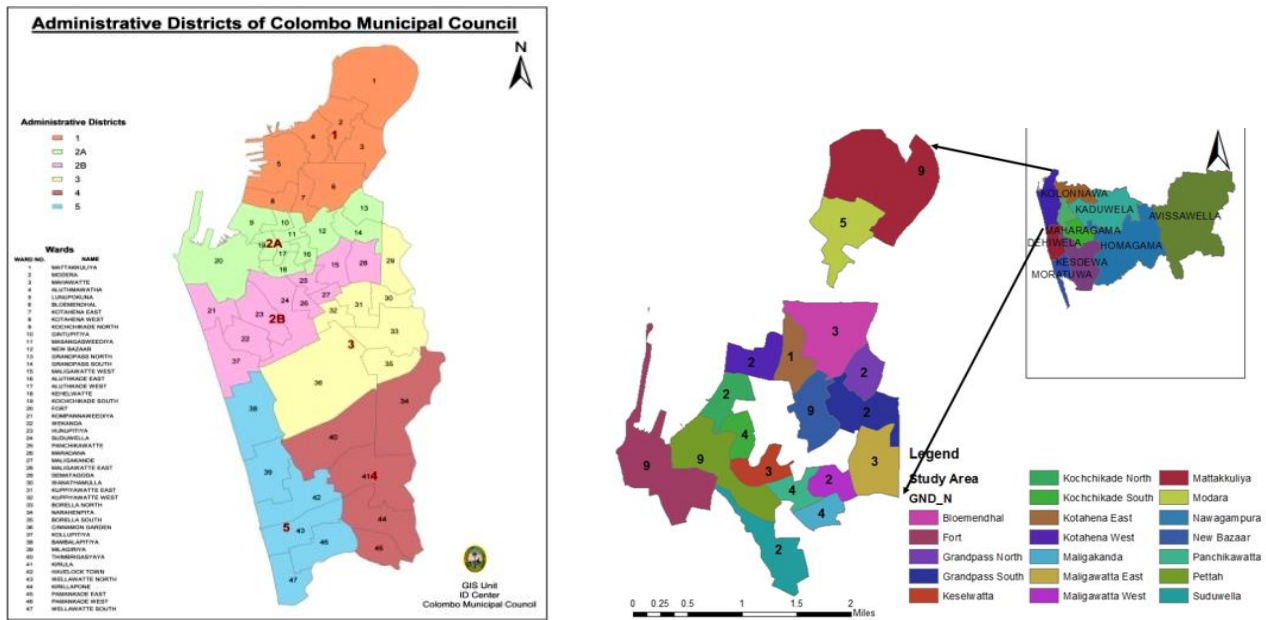


Fig 2

Accordingly, 12 more GN Divisions namely; *Mattakkuliya, Modera, Bluemendhall, Kotahena (East and West), New Bazaar, Grandpass, Maligawatta, Kochchikade, Suduwella, Keselwatta, Panchikawatta and Maligakanda* in addition to the GS Divisions of *Fort and Pettah* (14 DN Div.) were determined officially as to be the study area. These DN Divisions were exclusive areas for prominent gang leaders and each area is named by their alias names.

The sample size for this component was calculated using the following formula:

$$n = [a2 X p (1-p)]/d2$$

Where,

n = required sample size

α = critical value for specified confidence level (taken as 1.96)

p = proportion of events being measured among the gang members (taken as 0.5 to obtain the maximum sample size, as the previous proportions are not known)

d = absolute precision (taken as 0.05)

Though final sample size earmarked at the planning stage was 423, it had to be increased up to 493 mainly due to the snowball effect. Participants: Based on the research data, the most basic characteristic of the samples have been structured as follows by using the key variables such as age, location of the respondents and activities.

Data analysis

Survey System: Approach

This system has developed using Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 and Microsoft SQL server Management Studio 2008. The software interface and its functionalities are developed using C# programming language. It is a simple and modern, but object oriented programming language which has being developed by Microsoft. The system database built using slandered SQL (Structured Query Language) with support of Visual Studio - entity framework 4.0.

6. Findings and Discussions

Table 1: The composition of the research sample

Nos.	Grama Niladhari Division	Number of listed gangs	Number of membership
01.	Mattakkuliya	09	52
02.	Modera	05	39
03.	Bluemendhal	03	16
04.	Kotahena	03	14
05.	New Bazaar	09	67
06.	Fort	09	71
07.	Pettah	09	68
08.	Grandpass	04	22
09.	Maligawatta	05	28
10.	Kochchikade	06	30
11.	Suduwella	02	17
12.	Keselwatta	03	20
13.	Panchikawatta	04	24
14.	Maligakanda	04	25
	Total	75	493

Irrespective of the ethnic identity of Sinhalese, Tamil or Muslim, those involved in gang activities have shown common interest to become gang members. Though Sinhalese represent highest percentage within the density of population, the majority of shop owners in Colombo are Muslims. Hence, the compositions of ethnicity in gangs are represented by 34% of Muslims, 47% of Sinhalese and 17% of Tamil youth. There was no special age category of youths for joining gangs. When the overall age series between 18 – 32 is considered, 50.9% of youths joined in gangs represented in age range between 18 – 24, while 49.1%, were between the age range of 25 – 32 years, hence, it could be assumed that there had been no specific propensity of age to join gangs. Data processed were also affirmed that those who joined gangs are not only unmarried youths but those attributable to social and family responsibilities without time for relaxing are also eventually joined in gangs so as to spend leisure time enjoyably. Despite

the popular assumption of that married persons are with minimal interests to join gangs, there was no identifiable difference in between those two categories. The data analysis and the findings of this study revealed that 45% of the gang members are unmarried whereas, those who are married contributed 50.5%. (viz. married 22.5%; widowed 2%; divorced 4.5%; separately living 14%; living together 12%). Above findings prove that youths show common interest to join gangs irrespective of their marital status. In addition, 75% of married gang members are found to be fathers of two or more children. Apparently, this indicates a pathetic situation that married gang members pay higher respect for their gratifying and enjoyable life style than their responsibility on the deep-seated family related responsibilities.

Nevertheless, 90% of married gang members are within the age limit between 18 – 24 years, who also are fathers of two or more children. Though this array of age limit of youths need to be allocated for education and beginning of financial establishment, which is the normal phenomenon experienced in the country, above youths either become breed-winners and have taken family running responsibilities at very young age.

The study revealed that the youths in the gangs have pretty law academic qualifications. As disclosed by data analysis, 3% of them had never been to a school while 45% of youth had studied only up to Grade 8. Nevertheless, one could not see the actual knowledge acquirable at Grade 8 in comparison to the knowledge level displayed by these youth, and it was disclosed that they could proceed up to Grade 8 not because of the knowledge they possessed but, owing to the sympathy of the staff of the respective schools. Approximately, 3% of youth who never did schooling were noted as street children. On the contrary, those studied up to Advanced Levels 'were among those migrated to Colombo city on various purposes. As a whole a majority of youths represented less educated category whereas, Muslim youths displayed special skills in the usage of English language, which was visible compared to the different levels of skill shown by Sinhalese and Tamil youths. Apparently, there were no visible repentant feelings among those youths with low education; since such aspect is not an important matter within the social norms prevailed in these gangs. Those studied up to 'Advanced Levels brought up their grievance alleging that the low contribution received from their family settings was the main barrier for them to stop at the 'A' level. Apart from these two segments the third category of youths, who are from slums and shanties and they had started earning even minor income and spent same for enjoyable and humorous activities. Their utmost requirements are food and enjoyment. So that their sole effort was to earn money in whatever processes possible and easy, but do not want to pay and respect for the legality of such actions. Despite varied assistance extended by Government and also by Non-Governmental sector agencies to see their continuation of education, a large majority of children/students didn't want pay attention to such available facilities, since their primary motivate was to earn money. They treat the education is an evil deed. Furthermore, the 3% of youth who managed to complete various certificate courses have managed to find jobs in related fields of work.

It was also a noticeable factor within gang society that there

was a visible connection between access for employment or livelihood and to hold of membership in a gang. While portion of gang youths have managed to find their livelihood/income generation prior to join with a gang, some others find the livelihood and income generation ways, after joining with gangs, as a privilege of becoming a gang member.

When the term "jobs" referred by the gang youths are concerned, most commonly it is only a temporary way of income generation. The vast majority of the gang youths have temporary ways of income generation, while very few of them have permanent employment. Some of them earn money in irregular activities. It was a special feature that casual employees became as direct or meandering owners of assets available within the Colombo urban limits. It is observed those youths acquire public properties by force while formulating authoritative powers illegally. Vigorously active teams of youth take authority to make boney by allocating spaces adjoining to markets, bus stands and car parks to pavement hawkers for carrying out their businesses. It is mandatory for such pavement hawkers to pay regular tax; daily or weekly tolls to the respective gang members. It was visible that special youth gangs are practicing regular collection of levies in demarcated places in the city limits. Several individuals in these groups carry this task from generation to generation. Father run the business or activity and then hand to son, so that son becomes the "king" and no other person can compete. As only few gang youths are permanent employees, the remaining vast majority create links with regional political personnel to find income generation means. It is easy to find jobs through the politicians in the posts such as office peon, laborers in hospitals etc. Yet, these youths strongly reject such assistance since they feel the difficulties to follow routines of such employment hence, look for easy and quick ways of income generation irrespective of legal ways.

In contrast, those youth belong to the main society are struggling to find a job with a monthly salary, yet the expectations of gang youth are rather contradictory. Gang youth were accustomed to deal with changing income generating avenues within urban limit. They had also designed their involvement on such jobs as to be able to move with friends having enjoyed utmost freedom. In spite of the said avenues, youth were able to apply their entrepreneurial skills as to earn money having involved in miscellaneous income sources for which the basic requirement was to be as casual workers. Therefore these informal income generating avenues became solid sources to earn extremely good turn over compared to a monthly salary expectable through a permanent carrier.

Most popular categories of jobs among the gang youth are; self-employment, to run own businesses, sell sundry items, being pavement hawkers, trade laborers, weight carriers, motor repair cum garage work, taxi drivers and involved in brokering jobs as well. It is noticeable that Muslim youths in gangs have special skills in brokering jobs. Those involved in brokering could manage those well having applied their keenness, shrewd thinking, language skills as well as the skills acquired in most business related tasks. With the commencement of income earning activities with knick knack amount, these Muslim youth could expand their income

avenues to perform even prostitution, drug trafficking including many other profitable trades.

It was revealed that almost all the youth earn monthly income in dynamic and self-motivated manner. Besides, all strategic moves applied, the gangs' involvement in each and every income generating action was amazing. In spite of the purpose of betting, gambling and horse racing etc. were meant for pleasure, in reality, such processes are implemented to generate sudden income which was a message prevailing among the youth.

Compliant with the data and information available at the Department of Prison and the Department of Police the drug trafficking, sales and consumption by male and female in and around Colombo city turns out to be at a higher percentage. It is this zone which exceeds 60% of widely held publicity on drug related issues. It is not a secret that trafficking and circulation of harmful drugs come to pass to the members as well, tactfully and considerably with the intervention of gangs.

A 22 years old youth identified as Mg / Kg articulated that; "If Gune Aiya's gansee (gang) didn't bring the stuff (Badu-Drugs) our guys truly become helpless. Guys don't know how to deliver the substance. Once the Badu-Drugs are brought to the pertinent locations guys used to go to those sites to collect them and distribute for others. (#Gune ayya is a famous criminal gang member and he was arrested)

It was apparent that some of the respondents in youth gangs discharge the duty as intermediaries to deliver, trafficking and sale of drugs supplied in a microscopic manner by the organized gangs, in Colombo. Accordingly the gang members could earn a good sum of money as well, in the days when the supplies are in order. Gang members involved in the trafficking and sales of drugs disclosed that prices are high when the distribution of drugs are managed through middle level dealers and the menace of prices were not a critical issue since value of drugs exceeds the prices of gold, in their situation. As mentioned below by one of the youth involved in selling and trafficking drugs stated that availability of drugs is not a constant issue.

Youth respondent in age 24, whose code of identity is MW / TG expressed his views on the pricing monopoly that; "we take over drug packets from Lokkas (leaders). Then we used to make smaller size packets using the quantity of drugs we received. Afterwards those smaller packets are sold to a second person and that person sells the same packet to a third person. This way it goes from hand to hand and each person involved retains an amount out of each sale and that is how the ending price goes so high.

Research team could focus especially in locations such as Modera and Mattakkuliya that addicted youth were consuming drugs even during the day time. Like in many other commodity products the fluctuation of prices of Heroin too cannot be avoided by the local distributors. Gang members are also aware the different pricing scenarios as uttered by a youth shown within following statement.

Views shared by a senior police officer at Mattakkuliya

police station are as follows.

"It is no use of arresting these guys. When they are arrested and filed cases there is someone to bail out the accused. Or else, when they are returned from the jail after imprisonment they used to recommence the same activity. It is not possible to rehabilitate them too, because the tendency is there for them to return to the same surroundings. We also feel it is a tiresome task to arrest them over and over again and we got dejected too. Hence no other alternative than telling these guys to do whatever they want noticeably to the police. In case they are taken into custody no other option than chasing them away after a deal a blow".

Hence it is unambiguous that reasons affecting for access for the abundance of drugs is the slumbering situation prevailing in the social surrounding where youth members live and also the similar situation in prevalence within the law enforcement mechanism. One of the most critical factors against controlling drug selling and related pursues is the absence of proper rehabilitation methods to be practiced via eligible authorities for those youth released after legal proceedings as explained by a police officer.

Gang researchers have speculated about this selection and Socialization processes. For instance, selection may operate when new gang members are more likely to be drawn from among boys who already engaged in anti-social behaviors. On the other hand as gang members, boys, may be exposed to new opportunities to participate in new criminal activities. At the extreme, if the participation of gang members in criminal activity is entirely explained by selection, then eliminating gangs would lead to no reduction in crimes. Assessment on the drug related influences was given added priority during the study. As a result it was disclosed that there is a strong connection between gangs and the drugs which was revealed through above shown tables as well. Several features such as availability of higher ration of alcoholic or drug addicted persons within urban community which enables demand based supplying methods, and gangs which has prominence to escape from legal settings and including several other elements, gangs are fully equipped to deal with drugs. When the role of youth is concerned each of them has chances to distribute drugs, even while, they are employed, to act on spying and intelligence services, supplying prostitutes on hired basis are some of the assigned tasks each member has to perform other than the sale or trafficking of drugs. It is also a fact revealed that most of the pavement hawkers deal with drugs stealthily as their employment turns to be an ornament to perform whatever the task they involved. Pavement hawker in Pettah explained his practice as well as his desires of selling Marijuana

A pavement hawker aged, 27 with identification as PE/GA elaborates that "What I can do with 'knickknack' income earned by selling few items?. Yet, by doing this I can create different customer bases. When it is possible to deal with bit of "Mal" (Flowers – Marijuana/Kansa) only I can earn some cash.

Types of jobs involved by pavement hawkers are not suspected usually. However, the neighboring youth are aware

of their dealing with illegal businesses but no one wants to interrupt since repercussions in doing so can be too risky.

A female proprietor of a shop at the street named FO, aged 42 years expressed her views as follows

“We are frequently witnessing even during pretty day time varied transactions are happening in this street. Even though Police takes steady action to clear the whole street these illegal sellers cannot be traced. Sellers are so cunning and know how to escape.

They pretend as selling dresses, ornaments etc., but underneath what they sell are drugs. There are customers who are accustomed to come to these sellers. I will show you what is happening if you could wait for some time. After a while, a Muslim trader will come dressed in white color sarong and shirt and today he is late. He is the person delivers stuff for that youth (showed by fingering at a person). Dear Madam we cannot expose these things. If in case we are caught for uncovering secrets that is the end of all our lives.”

Views shared by public as explained above specify that outrageous power and advantages of gang leadership are always used by the youth to act as illegal traders. While these illegal sellers deal with drug sales they also work as servants under leading gangsters doing spy services etc., which has resulted that gang youth enjoy utmost safety and protection therefore the law hasn't been a challenge for them.

Most of the youth employed as weight carriers (*Natami*) and the youth involved in selling fruits, vegetable at Manning market are normally drug addicts. These youth are tactful and smart hence, each one plays major roles by working as supporters of bigger traders. Study outcome revealed that the income they derive daily is spent lavishly for drugs, gambling, betting, visiting lodgings and night clubs etc. Hidden expectation of pursuing youth to follow this type of lifestyle is to secure better income, find new market settings, and to retain them without leaving.

There are numerous factors to affirm the relationship between youth gangs and the quantity of drugs being circulated in Colombo city. One of such attributes is the extent of affiliation those youth gangsters have maintained with famous criminals as shown in Figure. It is a trend that any person could claim ownership for an attributed leadership. For this reason, act as hatchet men, getting ransom and similar incidences the gang leaders become owners.

Specially, the gang leaders identified during this study doesn't

spend a single rupee for their daily requirements. It is due to the free supply of best quality of meat, beef; fish are used to deliver by traders in the city. This type of supply is done just to maintain their businesses in the city without externally driven obstructions or constraints. In certain cases selling drugs also happening in these stalls hence protection through gang leaders becomes a vital requirement and these leaders are the only saviors to assist the victims.

A seller of a meat stall in Manning market aged 59 shared his views

“I used to send a quantity of meat to ‘Lokka’ (Gang leader) NB/BG sufficient for a week, free of charge. Because of his presence it is easy for us to continue this business. Without ‘badu’ (drugs) youth cannot continue this tasks of cutting and weighing meat. Yet on the other hand we are vulnerable as police can find us as drug dealers not only as consumers. Even then, Leader can manage all these obstacles in a methodical way hence we are safe.”

When the outcome of study on the consumption of alcohol and drugs is concerned, the analysis done through 493 respondents disclosed that those who are not addicted are fairly a small number. Only 3 of them claimed that they are not consuming drugs or alcohol now but they were using them earlier. Though they are not consuming drugs it was revealed during the interview that they are sellers of drugs. The deal of a youth in Fort briefed following way Who had consumed drugs earlier but has given it up in the recent past after experiencing heavy distressful occurrences but continue his involvement on selling drugs.

A youth in age of 21 years identified as FO/GA, shared his messages as follows; I consumed drugs continuously in the past. Nowadays my father is sick being a paralyzed patient. Mother died due to a sickness. Wife died at her first child birth. Child is safe and being looked after by one of my aunties. My wife at the last few minutes, between life and death requested me to give up the habit of drinking. Accordingly I have stopped my drinking habit. Yet, if I come across an opportunity to deliver “badu” (drugs) I used to do that as it gives me an income and it is vital since there are lot of problems to be resolved at home.”

A reflective factor is that the drug is widely spread within the society hence the drug is not a strange item of youth.

Table 2: The trends of respondent youth and their propensity on the use of substances (n=493)

Substance	Heroin Protection	Marijuana	Alcohol	Beedy/Cigarette	Forex D	Madanamodaka	Ash	Oopium	Restry	Susky	Ballapethy	SPC	Babul
Number	351	419	423	395	72	123	08	209	07	09	05	27	10
Percentage	71	85	86	80	14.5	25	1.5	42	1.4	1.8	1	5.5	2

(N: b: Though 3 of the youth claimed not consuming alcohol or drugs the study findings divulged that they take alternative substances).

Most of the drugs mentioned above are said to be carrying intoxicants and they are sold in many places in Colombo hence these brands became popular among the youth. The terms applied for different types of stuff are cited by the

respondent youth. According to the data assessment not a single gang youth found to be absolutely free from alcohol or drugs. Each respondent has experience on whatever intoxicant stuff. Mostly, Heroin and Cannabis were the most popular

substance. The term “*Mal Gasiema*” is commonly used in their local dialect for consuming Cannabis (Marijuana). Furthermore, attention was drawn for assessing their daily habits in connection to the addicted life style, and the pattern of usage of drugs is shown in bellow table.

Table 3: Quantities of the usage of harmful drugs by youth respondents (Heroin n= 351; Cannabis n= 419)

No. of packets used daily	Heroin		Cannabis	
	No. of Youth	%	No. of Youth	%
Between 1 to 2 packets	101	29	174	41.5
Between 3 to 4 packets	242	69	233	55.5
Between 5 to 6 packets	05	1.5	06	1.5
More than 7 packets	03	0.5	06	1.5
Total	351	100	419	100

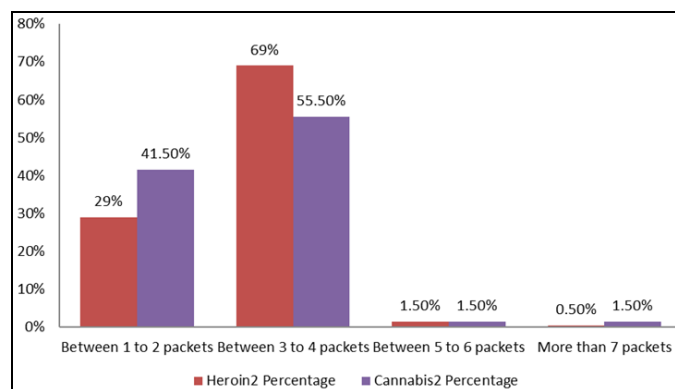


Fig 3: Volume of the usage of Heroin and Cannabis of respondent youth

There appears to be much higher percentage of youth consumes drugs or Cannabis or both as a daily routine. In reference to the expression of respondents that protection and popularity were the expectations of joining gangs yet, access for drugs in this scenario becomes a hidden agenda particularly for the addicted youth. The highest percentages of those using Heroin and Cannabis represent 69% and 55.5% respectively as shown in above table and the Figure.

It is also obvious that scale of the consumption of drugs and the income of youth has a strong inter-relationship. In this regard, Monthly income of respondent youth is shown in chapter 3. According to the table, monthly income of 1% of youth is less than Rs. 2,500/=; while 10% earns between Rs. 2,501/= to 5,000/=, whereas, income derivability of 24% is within the range of Rs. 5,001/= to Rs. 10,000/= Also, the earning of 26% of youth varies from Rs. 10,001/= to Rs.15,000/= Also revealed that 20% of youth has capacity to earn between Rs. 15,001/= to Rs.20,000/= and a lesser percentage of 5% earns between Rs.20,001/= Rs.25,000/= While, 14% managed to earn beyond Rs.25000. However, it is noted that there is a strong connection between income derivability and the amounts being spent on drugs, hence further steps taken during the study to assess the size of earnings versus amounts spent on drugs.

Table 4: Pattern of daily expenses of responded youth on drug related substances (n = 493)

Expenses incurred daily	Number	Percentage
1. Less than Rs.100	04	0.8
2. Between Rs.101 - 500	22	4.5
3. Between Rs.501 - 1000	40	8
4. Between Rs.1001 - 1500	328	66.5
5. Between Rs.1501 - 2000	79	16.2
6. Between Rs.2001 - 2500	06	1.2
7. Between Rs.2501 - 3000	05	1
8. Between Rs.3001 - 3500	05	1
9. More than Rs.3501	04	0.8
Total	493	100

As shown in Table 4 the responded youth shared further information declaring that a kilogram of Heroin is needed to make 900 smaller packets carrying 1 ½ g in each tiny packet. Selling price of a packet of Heroin is from 450/= to 500/= and Rs.100 is charged for a packet of Cannabis. Adding further, youth claimed that minimum 4 packets of Heroin are needed by an addicted person per a day thus, his daily expenses exceeds Rs.1500/=. As illustrated in the two Tables No. 4.8 and 4.9, 69% of addicted youth consume 3 – 4 packets a day spending minimum Rs.1500 each day. By virtue of the correctness of these data the study team believes the apparent accuracy of data furnished by the respondents.

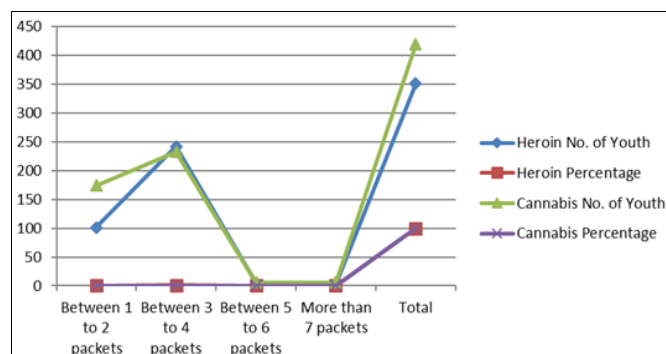


Fig 4: Pattern of daily expenses on drug related substances (n = 493)

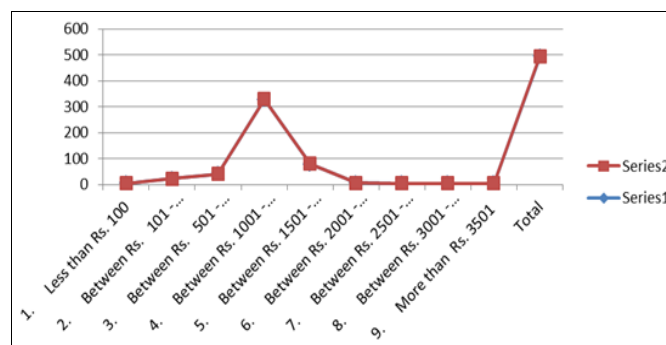


Fig 5

Further details shared by the respondents revealed that substance of Cannabis used by 42% of youth. Information

shared further exemplified the way how Cannabis is used. Shared views showed the depth of understanding of youth on the use of drugs, irrespective of whether their beliefs are correct or wrong. Youth are in the opinion that the dose of Cannabis should be in micro quantities to avoid possible mental illnesses hence when Cannabis are used they mix them with some other types of substances.

When the art of using substances is concerned the youth members used to assemble in a place in the evening, in holidays, or on rainy days or else when they find leisure times except morning hours to consume drugs as a hobby. Customarily, they don't use same premise repeatedly to use substance due to the threat of legal proceedings, yet, if the need arises to use same premises continually, either street boys or elderly persons are arranged to be watchful on any external threat and the gangs used to pay for those doing spy services. These spying cadres perform their duties in an efficient manner since they are paid for the duty, when gangs assemble in different geographical locations, such as small townships, abandoned locations or behind restaurants.

Nevertheless, there were occasions where substance users had been arrested by police. In such instances the gang leaders had set out bail out procedures and had released their cadres. In certain other occurrences the said intervention had failed to resolve the matter and those arrestees had to be in jail, some others shared their experience uttering how police took actions to assault them and to chase them away.

A 19 year old youth bearing code of identity FO/AG/Ke, articulated that " however much 'Mal or Kudu' (Ganja or Heroin) is taken guys in 'Bajar' (Street) feel starving if no smoking is possible, means to enjoy with a cigarette or at least with a small portion of Beedy. At 10.00a.m. In the morning and after lunch it is enforced to have something to warm up the body.

Further views such as "If you are a boy you must smoke. Those so-called devotees who do not even enjoy a cigarette cannot be fitting into our bajar" "those women hood persons don't have man hood personalities" proved their addiction of substances.

The tendency of uttering similar terms indicates well that there is no space within gangs for youth who are culturally better-off. These expressions also pronounce that for individuals in similar age cannot be associated or be teamed up unless there are unique objectives and similar personnel qualities. Also revealed that youth addicted for substance use also desirous of smoking too. As expressed by a gang youth from Fort area claimed the need of smoking.

Since, wide range of prominences are exposed on the usage of substances, while also displaying extreme attachment for drugs with fairly big amount of money spent and methods followed etc. the study process has lengthened its focus to ascertain what type of objectives the gangs followed in respect of the usage of substances. Superficially, the responses shared on the drug addiction were; for fun, to associate with friends, to eliminate physical tiredness, to forget complications at family setting. But in reality, usage of substance turns to be a generalized practice and to be part of their sub culture. Currently, this sub culture itself has paved the way to attract

youth to be addicted on drugs. It is also a fact that this habit has created harmful environment for their family settings as well. Due to the practice that entire earnings are spent lavishly on drugs has formulate a challenge to maintain domestic expenses. Among several family disputes revealed by the responded youth, there were 9 widowed family units, 21 divorced families, and 70 cases of separated families were reported. In addition there were 111 families entered into registered marriages while 60 units of couples living together and altogether 271 married units represent 55% of total have established their reproductive family leaving away born family setting, yet, main cause for disrupted families is the drug addiction. A lady from Mattakkuliya shared her pathetic story explaining how alcohol as a menace destroyed her family which is a commonly prevalent factor in this socio cultural setting.

A 23 years old lady separated from husband from Mattakkuliya cited that ...

"Returns home every day middle of the night as a drunkard. Children born to us are similar to the steps of a ladder. With influence of liquor he attacks me my children in the night. Finally no other solution than separating from him. Now I am alone and living with my mother.

There are 222 youth equal to 45% of them are unmarried. Group of unmarried respondents became part and parcel with substances use merely due to their lonely living. A 62 year old lady from Modera expressed a chain of incidence happened in her family due to the alcoholism and the drugs used by herself too.

A mother from Modera, aged 62, articulated her experience in an alcoholic family background.

"I am a mother of 5 daughters and one boy. My husband died when my children were too small. Thereafter, I took all the burdens for taking care of children. Daughters got married with guys from the 'bajar' (street). They are unable to spend their lives happily due to their alcoholic husbands. It is a daily incident that at least one in the family is in the jail. They are drug addicted. When they run short of money to buy heroin, tend to involve in thievery or smuggling. My son at his childhood worked in a buggy. Now he is a member of gang identified as GP/PG in Grandpass. He is famous for all uncivilized activities. Until recent past the only asset I had was pair of ear-ornaments. I securely kept it for pawning purposes to manage financial emergencies. Even that was grabbed by force by my son having shown a knife, a month ago to buy Heroin. I too, used to consume drugs in the past. Doctor advised me to give up the habit of taking drugs due to my sickness hence, I stopped it gradually. Also when I didn't have money no way to continue same. The status of poverty was the reason affected our children to suffer in their lives.

Another adverse situation emerged due to the substance use is the change of physical appearance of the body including glands. Turbid color eyes, Stiffed arms and legs, off-color skin, thinned body, dark colored lips, or even fashions of dressing etc., indicates that they are drug addicts or drunkards. One other visible feature is the habit of tattooing. Also at the

times of taking drugs the addicts like to see blood hence pictures of animals are tattooed. For example, the leader of the gang at Maligawatta identified as MW/BG together with his 7 gang members carry tattoos of scorpion placed on shoulder on the right hand. They responded on the question with regard to the tattoo saying that it reflects dreadfulness. Commenting on the scorpion the respondents cited that this creatures poisonous, easily untraceable due to the size, used to sting when the time comes. Similarly, the members said that gang also does things in poisonous way. Information was disclosed that three gang members are in custody at the time for cases of taking ransom and a murder.

One other crucial side effect of the addiction on substances use is the often clashes within families, loosing supportive environment for schooling children, doing varied scales of domestic violence etc., were described by the family members of gang respondents, on inquiries. Facts disclosed that this situation is much adverse in areas such as; Modera, Mattakkuliya, Keselwatta where majority of families live in slum and shanties including unauthorized living surroundings. Nevertheless, there was a specific gang of Suduwella headed by SW/SG which is consisted with 9 members. Specialty is that this gang is a popular gang among the families living in the area as it is explained in earlier chapter as well, Sphere of popularity was that the leader, irrespective of his addiction for drugs, has emphasized to his members that all the members should fulfill their obligations to their parents and for the rest of the family members. One of the youth members uttered as follows saying that if a clash is happened in a family the leader will punish the guilty party. 19 year old student from Suduwella studying in a technical college expressed that... "A gang leader in this area named.... (SW/SG) is a popular personality among the people here. This gang hasn't been a botheration to the community living here. If anyone in his gang happened to create a clash at home SW/SG used to be equipped with a weapon which is a long and sharp knife used in fish stalls. Everyone is afraid on his action hence, no whatsoever, clashes happening within families.

The above analysis of the different manifestations between urban youth and the drugs, alcohol and smoking illustrates a complex but paradoxical combination. The substances usage culture became the deciding factor of income source as well as the source of expenses. Community in the main society is based on different aims. These communities chase behind hopes for better employments, education, better houses, bulk earnings, and vehicles and so on. In contrast, urban youth gang members run after daily earnings going beyond all above said needs and to spent on drugs and alcohol. In a country like Sri Lanka the market for drugs is so strongly functioning mainly due to these youth. These gang youth had shown their capacity to become buyers as well as sellers also creating subsidiary sellers of stuff. One other incidence disclosed was that gang members have developed market channel to sell drugs for male and female prisoners at Welikada prison. Gang members are aware that out of large clientele on drugs the prisoners too are buyers of drugs on reasons that more than 50 % of prisoners are drug addicts. When some of the gang members happened to be sentenced imprisonment they are capable of identifying groups inside the prison and develop

network to sell drugs as this incidence is further explained by the following youth.

A 23 year old youth from MW/EG's gang identified as MW/RM says that ... "When one of our guys happened to be jailed he uses his tactics and become friends of several groups inside the prison. These prisoners too are desperately spending their time without access for drugs. We are capable for directing our sales channels through known guys to the deserving prisoners. This transaction is based on a strong trust. Because of that whenever they are released from the prison they want to become our customers. Even some of them get the opportunity to join our gangs too.

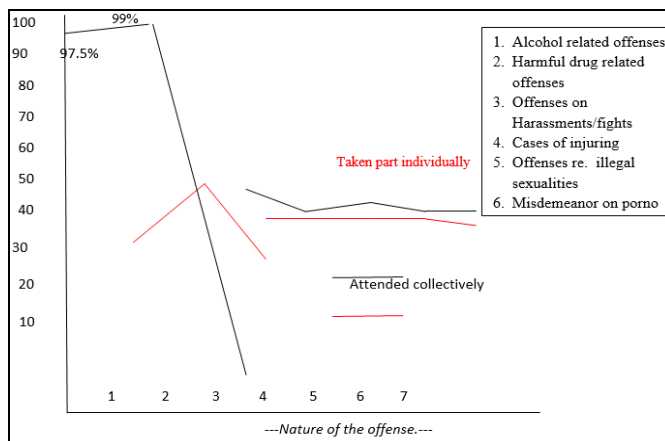


Fig 6: Nature of the propensity of involving in criminal acts

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the above details reflect by and large that there is a strong linkage between gang members and the drugs and alcohol. In the hidden context the organized gang actions challenge law and order as well while creating harmful impact towards social disorganization too. However much legal provisions are there to administer the affairs of main society these gangs have exceeded such procedures and as a result the delinquent gangs emerged.

8. Recommendations

Factors contributing the establishment and existence of gang culture can be disturbed, diluted and removed by resettling the poorly established urban settings and societies in suitable residential environments with standard basic amenities such as housing, sanitation, healthcare, education and legal and acceptable opportunities of income generating. Such scenario is identified as CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) concept, which is successfully implemented in developed countries with desired deliverables. This concept can control the geographical spaces for vulnerability for criminal activities and gang existence in urban zones.

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