

Assessment of The Socio-Economic Background and Role of Family in Rehabilitation of Juvenile Delinquents in Kenya

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.10.2019.p9451
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.10.2019.p9451>

Abstract: This paper is an assessment of the socio-economic background and role of family in rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Kenya. The study was guided by coercion and social learning theory. A sample 120 respondents consisting of 99 juvenile delinquents and 21 parents of the ex-rehabilitees was selected.

The study found out that the size of families of the juvenile delinquents consisted of an average number of four siblings. The relationship between the juvenile delinquents and their families before arrest were very bad but significantly improved after the juveniles went through the rehabilitation process. Cases of violence in the family were high and they went unreported. Family involvement in the rehabilitation programmes was very minimal, family therapies/ counseling were never practiced in any of the institutions. The study recommend for economic support and empowerment of needy families, inclusion of family therapies/ counseling in the rehabilitation programmes, family conferences and involvement of families in the rehabilitation programmes.

Key words: Juvenile Delinquent, Juvenile Justice System, Rehabilitation Programme, Rehabilitation school

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of high cases of family disintegration and break down is an evidence of a serious social problem in the contemporary society. As a result of the dysfunctional families, children are the most vulnerable and have encountered death in some instances, depression, neglect, orphan-hood when a spouse kills the other and delinquency. The disintegration of social structures have been witnessed all over the world with increased cases of juvenile delinquents who face criminal charges and those that go through the Juvenile Justice System for being in need of care and protection (Darbouze, 2008).

According to Mwendwa (2016), in the year 2016 cases of school unrests were on the rise and cases of juvenile delinquents that went through the Juvenile Justice Systems were very high as a result; while over 2,000 cases of children in need of care and protection were pending in court. A study by Odongo (2017), found out that the number of inmates who were in adult prisons aged below 18 years was 2,570 in 2013 and 3,455 in 2014, indicating a rise in the number of inmates by 885 between 2013 and 2014. This is an indication that juvenile delinquency in the country is rising at a high rate and this raises concerns on the handling of such cases from the first to the last stage by the Juvenile Justice System. Odongo, (2017) further noted that delinquency was occasioned by high levels of poverty in the country, the high rates of unemployment and the strained family relationships and social structures.

Due to the rising juvenile delinquency cases, the Government of Kenya has put in place Rehabilitation Schools that offered rehabilitation programmes to the juvenile delinquents who are committed therein. These rehabilitation programmes are child friendly and are supposed to ensure that the juvenile delinquents are reformed in character and become law abiding citizens before they are reintegrated back to the community (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006). The juvenile delinquents rehabilitation schools are established by the Children's Act, 2010 and juveniles are committed therein for a minimum of one year and maximum of three years after which they are expected to have reformed.

A survey by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, (2015) indicates that 76.9% of the cases of the juveniles reintegrated between 2012 and 2013 recidivated and this was attributed to stigma that the juveniles faced after release from the rehabilitation schools. The survey also noted that rehabilitation schools programmes were inadequate in addressing the rehabilitation needs of the juveniles and that the rehabilitation schools infrastructures had strained.

The social problems facing the juveniles may be attributed to poor parenting skills as well as absentee parents. It is important to note that families play an important role in the lives of the juveniles and therefore neglect (un)willingly could result to delinquency. An assessment of the effects of socio-economic family background of the juvenile delinquents with the intention of strengthening the role of families in the rehabilitation process of the juvenile delinquents is therefore very key in addressing juvenile delinquency in Kenya.

Objectives of the study

- 1) To establish the socio-economic background of the juvenile delinquents in Kenya
- 2) To examine the role of the family in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Socio-Economic Background of the Juvenile Delinquents

Understanding family is very key in understanding how children become delinquent. It is very essential to study some basic characteristics of families that would help in understanding the juvenile delinquents and how to deal with each case individually since their cases are unique depending on the family background and the personal characteristics of the juvenile delinquents.

The family is the primary agent of socialization and studies by different scholars have shown that the background of a family is very crucial for the progress of delinquency (Cashwell & Vacc, 1996; Shields & Clark, 1995; Wright & Wright 1994; Mack et al, 2007). Child delinquency is influenced by the family through rearing practices and the interaction between a child and the parents (Stormshak et al, 2000). When children are parented positively during the early years of growth and development, then this acts as a

way of preventing delinquent behavior and assisting adolescents involved in such behavior to resist from future delinquency at adolescence. Children who face rejection from their parents; those who have grown up in homes with significant levels of violence and those who are not supervised adequately, have a greater risk of becoming delinquents. In their studies Wright & Wright (1994), state that all children do not necessarily follow the pathway of delinquency and that the family is the foundation of society.

The absence of fathers from the lives of children can be linked to the rising frequency of juvenile delinquency, crime, adolescence suicide, dejection and other disorders including food related disorders, substance and drugs' abuse. When a household has two parents it is seen to provide an increase in close watch and supervision of children. Single parenting on the other hand increases the probability of delinquency among the juveniles and discrimination due to the fact that there is only one parent to provide close supervision (Wright & Wright, 1994).

Social control theory by (Hirschi, 1969) states that social bonds are what helps people to avoid committing criminal activities. These include maintaining powerful bonds within the family and the social institutions like the churches and schools; this could aid in juveniles not turning to delinquency acts. Research shows that children who are closer to their mother had a lesser likelihood of delinquency (Loeber et al, 2003). Those children who lived in an environment that was with poverty-stricken neighborhoods; where the youths and adults were committing criminal activities were most likely to imitate those actions because they were deemed acceptable.

Studies on adolescent boys and girls show that those who were mainly in conflict with the law, lacked most of the basic things in parenting like the parental love, care and guidance. These were at all times mentioned as significant factors to prevent children from ending up in difficulties (Martin and Parry, 2005). Studies indicate that the future behavior of an individual would be better predicted by the past behavior (Loeber, et al, 2003). As stated by Kazdin & Kendall (1998), an understanding of the early appearance of some problematic behaviors would assist in creation of effective interventions that would prevent the development of child delinquency.

Family distinctiveness which include: parents who are anti-social, parents abusing drugs and substances, families with history of violence, families that are large in size and predominance of abuse like physical abuse were seen as some of the risk factors that played into the participation of children in juvenile delinquency (Loeber, et al, 2003). Furthermore, there are other risk factors that expose children to delinquency at very young ages. Peer pressure is a major contributing factor to juvenile delinquency. Research has shown that peer relations were the most significant contiguous cause of adolescent delinquency (Payne & Cornwell, 2007). Loeber, et al (2003), shows that the youth who relate with delinquent peers were at a higher risk of being arrested than the youth who did not

relate with such peers. Kazdin (1995), found that parent bonding and involvement can prevent children from committing crime and can lead to faster rehabilitation of those who have committed crime.

Parental neglect was considered to include parents having no time with their children; either by not having time to talk to them, lack of interest in their lives, either from willfully neglecting them or due to the pressures of providing for the families. Support of the children by the parents, including but not limited to skills in parenting and good parenting practices, were rarely ever given a priority or available (Martin and Parry, 2005). Research has shown that whenever a child doesn't get adequate attention and also the parents are totally not involved because of other matters such as substance abuse increases delinquency. Similarly, most of the juvenile delinquents come from families that are poverty stricken and with many siblings (Mincey et al, 2008).

Role of the Family in the Rehabilitation of Juvenile Delinquents

In the contemporary family set up, the parents have been involved in their jobs and in the provision of the basic needs rather than being present in the daily lives of their children. Children have mostly been left in the hands of house helps and teachers who have taken over the role of parenting. With the advancement of technology, the internet and social media platform provides a new way of socialization for the children. The pressure of making a living and a decent living in that case could be the cause of unintended neglect of children. Children need role models and parents who are able to monitor them on every aspect of their life and provide guidance especially in this delicate stage of adolescence.

Immarigeon (1996) stated that for justice to be better served there was need for the juveniles to be steered on the right path through involvement of families in the juvenile justice system. According to Wright & Wright (1994), a family teaches a child to manage behavior that is not acceptable, to postpone satisfaction and to respect the fundamental privileges of others. Hence family is the strongest socializing agent in the life of a child. It is important to note that since families play a key role in teaching the adolescents behavior, they should be fully involved in the rehabilitation of the juveniles.

Family is one of the most influential agent in the lives of the children hence involvement of families is very crucial in rehabilitation (Wright & Wright, 1994) focuses on models of rehabilitating juvenile delinquents. He focuses on Functional Family Therapy and intensive counseling which helps in the recognition of dynamics among the youths and their families. The other model he focuses on is multidimensional management Foster Care which combines short-range, restorative foster care among the adolescent group with thorough therapy for the family, which is then followed by a swift reunification and continuous support. Social learning theory suggests that a hostile behavior is acquired through learning; and as parents show hostile behavior, children learn to imitate this as an acceptable means to achieve their goals.

OPPAGA Report (2007), advocated for family counseling and therapy to treat offenders. This was because maintaining strong family ties during incarceration and establishment of these positive ties after release from the rehabilitation schools were linked to successful re-entry into the society hence it helped in reducing cases of recidivism. Family therapy helps in the explanation of control theory (Hirsch, 1969) since it helps in creating stronger social bonds hence the juveniles have a lesser likelihood of recidivating because strong family relationships have been restored through the process. Families that are supportive to the juvenile delinquents during the rehabilitation process helps them to overcome the difficult experiences (Mincey et al, 2008). Family therapy therefore is very key in allowing the whole family to go through the rehabilitation process since they are provided with an opportunity of processing the circumstances of the delinquent child.

Theoretical Framework

The study has used coercion and social learning theory. According to various scholars, (Dishion & Patterson, 1997; Patterson, 1996, 1997; Patterson & Yoerger, 1993; Snyder & Patterson, 1987), coercion is an aversive event that leads to the strengthening of harmful conduct. Coercion process on the other hand can be described as a series of response loops that increases with time. According to coercion theory, when the parent tends to ignore aversive habits, it allows children to get away with the early improper and aversive behaviours. These coercive behaviours further are shown, maintained and exhibited through both positive and negative strengthening each time the behaviour sequence recurs. Negative reinforcement tends to reoccur when the parents abstain from disciplining attempt in the face of the aversive response of the child (Dishion & Patterson, 1997). It can therefore be assumed that the child develops delinquency behavior as a result of poor parenting especially when negative reinforcement is accepted.

Family behaviors, which include parental supervision, close monitoring and effective disciplining, tend to influence the associations with deviant peers throughout the adolescent period (Cashwell & Vacc 1996). Family influences how peers select their peer groups associations (Cashwell & Vacc 1996. Peers that develop more coercive interpersonal style are inclined to mix up with one another and the interaction is assumed to increase the likelihood that they would be involved in delinquency.

This theory is relevant in explaining how parenting influences the behavior of a child either positively or negatively. Poor parenting especially when negative reinforcement is accepted influences the child negatively resulting to delinquency. Involvement of the families in the rehabilitation process of the juvenile delinquents is therefore important since the family is the primary socialization agent of the child and can easily influence the juvenile delinquents either positively or negatively.

Social learning theory posits that social behavior can be learnt by observing and imitating others and this can occur in the absence of direct reinforcement (Bandura, 1963). Further, social learning can occur through rewards and punishments. When a social behavior is rewarded it is more likely to persist. On the other hand, if a behavior is punished constantly, that behavior could cease.

This theory therefore indicates that since social behavior is learnt, it could also be unlearned through providing a conducive home environment, effective parenting and effective rehabilitation process. This theory is relevant in explaining the role of peer group affiliations in the socialization process of the juvenile delinquents. Delinquency may be influenced by positive/ negative peer affiliations that the juveniles associate with both at home and in the rehabilitation schools.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Site Selection and Description

The study was carried out in two rehabilitation schools: Kabete and Kirigiti Rehabilitation Schools which are boys and girls institutions respectively. Kabete Rehabilitation School is located in Nairobi County while Kirigiti Rehabilitation School is located in Kiambu County. Kirigiti Rehabilitation School is classified as medium/ high risk institution while Kabete Rehabilitation School is classified as medium risk institution. The two institutions which are classified as high/ medium risks institutions and serving different categories of gender were selected so as to allow the study to do a comparison of different genders.

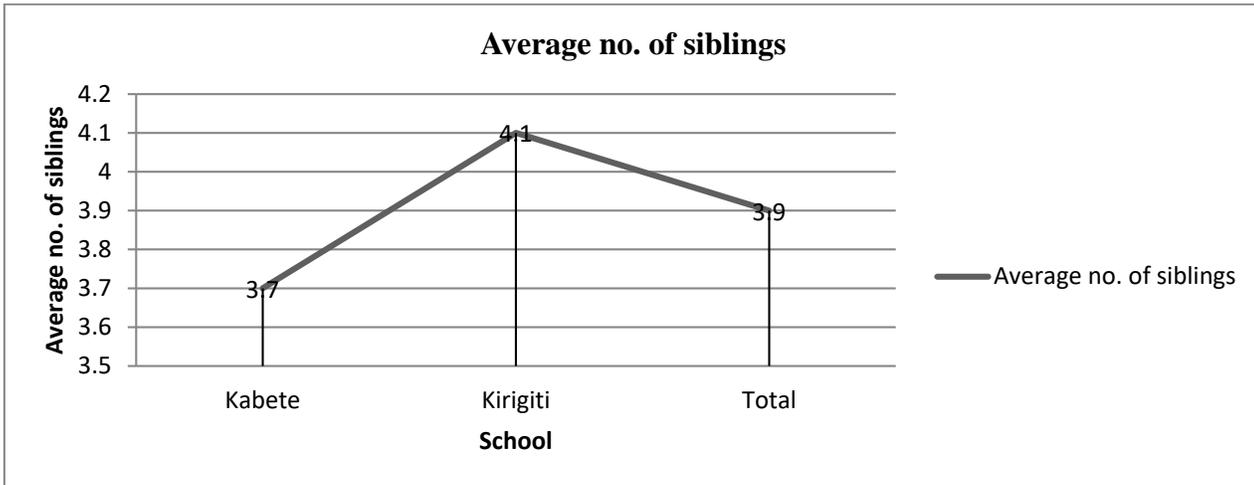
Research Design and Sample Size

“Research design provides the glue that holds the research project together. It is used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project work together to try to address the central research questions” (Trochim, 2005). This study applied descriptive research design since it allowed the researchers to observe the subjects in their natural environmental setting without affecting their behavior. Purposive sampling was used to sample the two rehabilitation schools: Kabete and Kirigiti Rehabilitation Schools which are boys’ medium risk and girls medium/ high risk institutions respectively located in Nairobi and Kiambu Counties respectively. Purposive sampling was used to sample 99 juvenile delinquents who had stayed at the institution for at least one year: 47 boys from Kabete and 52 girls from Kirigiti while systematic sampling was used to sample 21 parents of the ex-rehabilitees. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through administration of structured questionnaires which had both open ended and closed ended questions. Key informant interviews were conducted to supplement the qualitative data.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

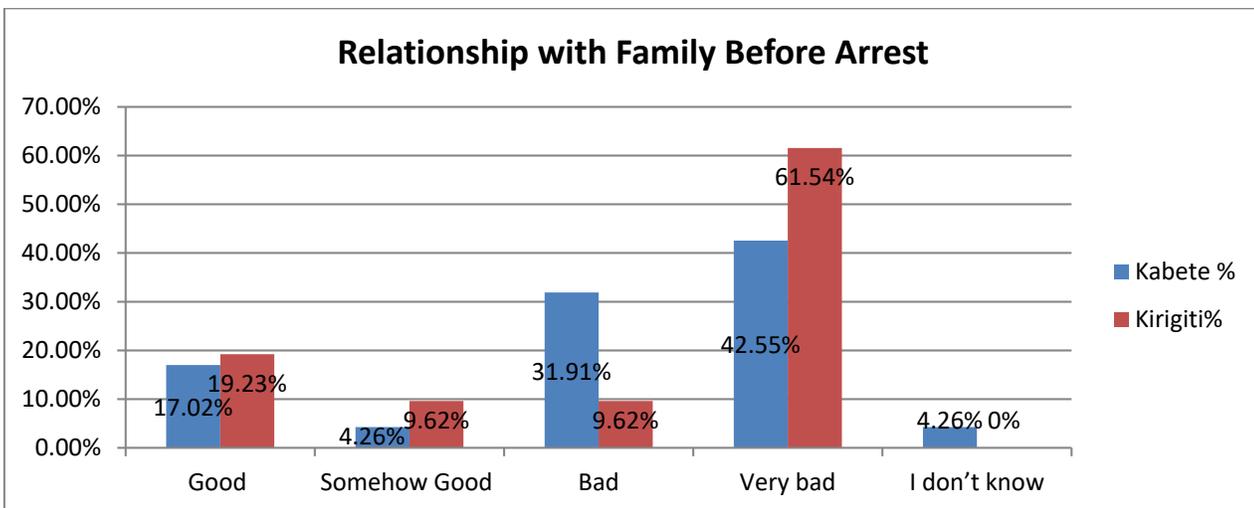
The Socio-Economic Background of Juvenile Delinquents

4.1 Average Number of Siblings



The study established that the families of respondents in Kabete had an average number of three children while Kirigiti had an average of four children even though there were few families reported to have up to seven and nine siblings.

4.2 Family Relationships



The study established that the relationship between the juveniles and their families before they were arrested were rated as very bad at the rates of 61.54% and 42.55% for girls and boys respectively. For the boys the relationships were rated as bad at the rates of 31.91% while girls rated them as bad at the rate of 9.62%. The relationships were rated as good at the rates of 19.23% and 17.02% for girls and boys respectively while somehow good was rated 9.62% and 4.26% for girls and boys respectively. The relationships between the

families and their juveniles were therefore very bad before they were arrested and committed to the rehabilitation schools. The relationships were rated as very bad since in some instances the children complained of total neglect by their parents; and due to child delinquency the children were rejected by their families and sent away and some ended up in the streets while others went to live with relatives.

4.3 Family Relationships After Arrest and Rehabilitation

Relationship after Arrest and Rehabilitation	Kabete		Kirigiti		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
I don't know	0	0.00	3	5.76	3	3.03
It has been very bad	10	21.30	11	21.14	21	21.21
We have a strong relationship	5	10.65	10	19.21	15	15.15
It has improved, we never used to talk but nowadays we do	31	64.98	27	51.89	58	57.57
No one knows my whereabouts	0	0.00	1	1.92	1	1.01
With my mother and siblings its good but with my stepfather no change	1	2.13	0	0.00	1	1.01
Total	47	100	52	100	99	100

The highest number of juveniles stated that their relationships with the families after arrest and rehabilitation had improved since they were arrested and committed to the rehabilitation schools at the rate of 57.6% of which 64.5% were boys and 52.9% were girls. A 14 year's old girl stated:

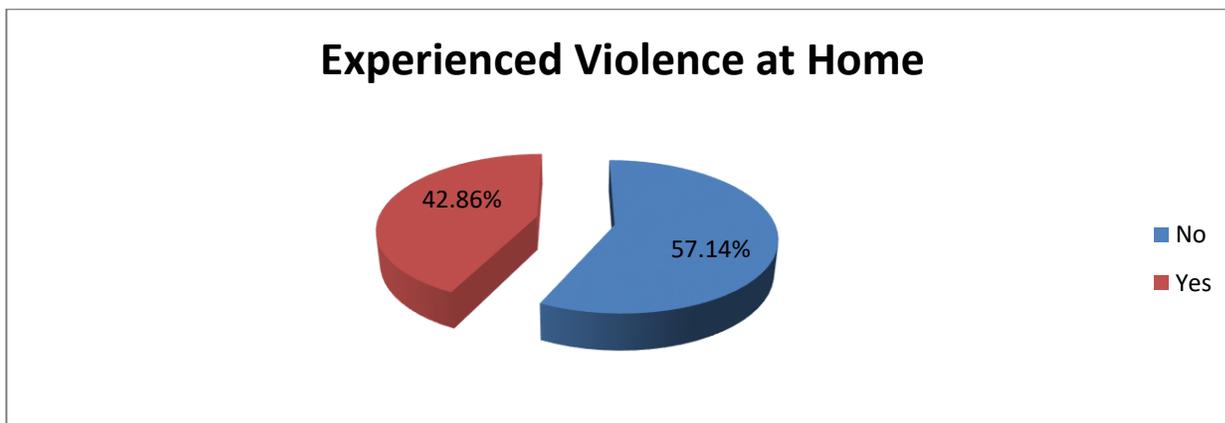
“When I was arrested and taken to the police station, my parents never followed up on me, actually when they were called in court none came. While at the remand, they never used to pick my calls and no one knew what happened to me until a year later when the rehabilitation school did home tracing and my family was shocked to see me reformed. Since then, we reconciled and they have been visiting me and providing my needs while at the institution, this has actually helped me to change and I look forward to the day I will leave this institution”.

Some juveniles (21.2%) stated that their relationships with their families were still very bad, some parents even never used to pick calls from their children. Some stated that their parents had threatened to kill them if they ever tried calling them, others had been disowned by their families calling them “black sheep”, others “bad omen”, and their families didn't want to relate with them. Some (15.2%) stated that their relationships with their families were still very strong and not affected in any way by the committal to the rehabilitation schools.

A few juveniles stated that no one knew about their whereabouts while others stated that their relationships with their siblings and mothers were not affected but their relationships with their stepfathers were very bad at the rates of 1% for both while 3% did not know how their relationships with their families were. A girl aged 17 years who had stayed at the institution for 2 years stated:

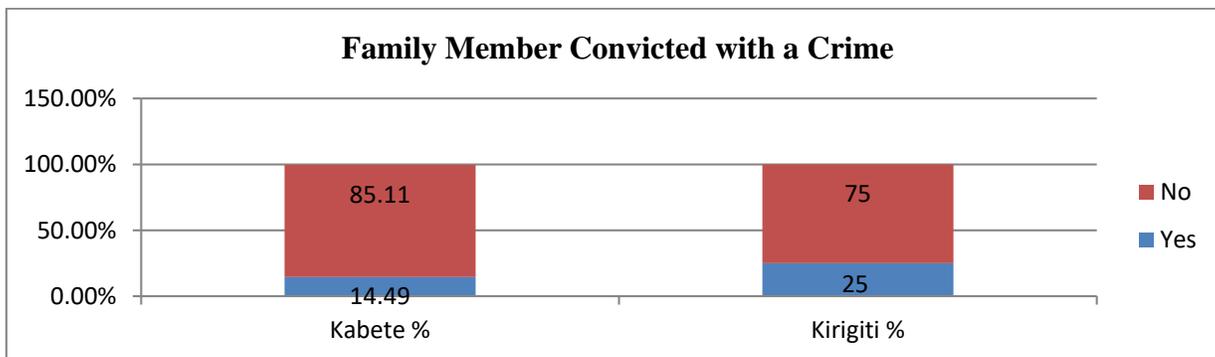
“I am still bitter about my mother, she used to bring men at home to sleep with me and get paid, and I will never forgive her and I never wish to go back to that family. I will look for my father when I am released to go and live with him, if he does not love me, I will have no option but to go and live with my grandmother”.

4.4 Parents Responses on Violence at Home



A large number of parents (57.1%) stated that they had never experienced any form of violence at home while 42.9% had experienced violence at home. This however shows that cases of violence at home were still high and most of them went unreported. Almost all the parents who had experienced violence stated that they had never reported violence cases in any office except two who had reported at the children offices.

4.5 History of Family Involvement in Crime



Juveniles were requested to state whether any of their family members has ever been convicted with a crime and only 14.5% of the boys stated that a family member had been convicted with a crime while 25% of the girls stated the same. Boys and girls at the rates of 85.1% and 75% consecutively did not have any of their family members convicted in crime. Elements of crime in the juveniles' families were therefore evident even though not in high magnitudes.

4.6 Types of Crime Committed by Family Members

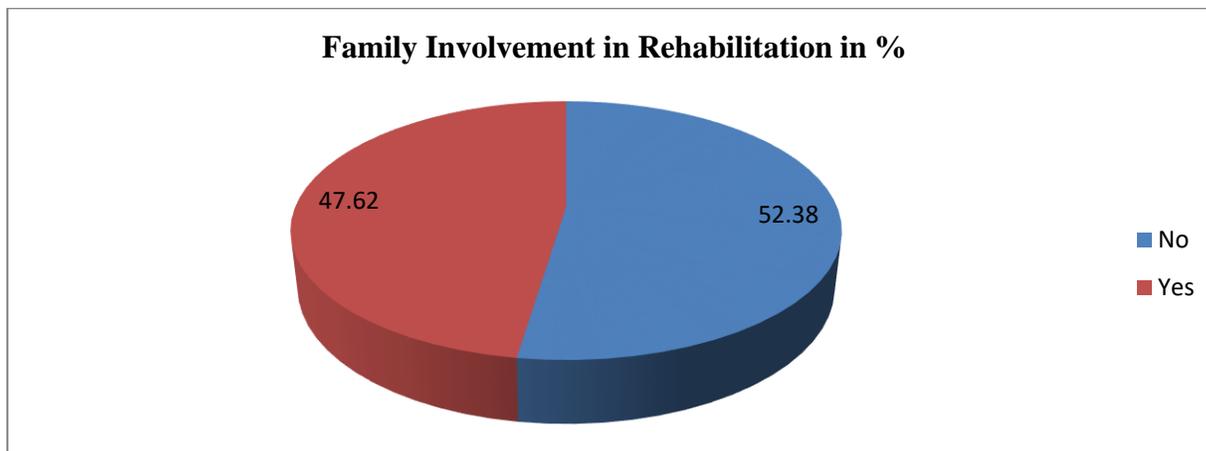
Crime Committed	Kabete	Kirigiti	Total
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	n	%	n	%	N	%
I don't know, I was young	1	14.29	1	7.69	2	10
Abusing family members	0	0.00	2	15.38	2	10
Assault	0	0.00	1	7.69	1	5
Child neglect and prostitution	0	0.00	2	15.38	2	10
Destruction of property	0	0.00	1	7.69	1	5
Driving with no license & drunkenness	1	14.29	0	0.00	1	5
Drug trafficking	1	14.29	1	7.69	2	10
Robbery, rape and arson	0	0.00	1	7.69	1	5
Stealing	4	57.15	4	30.77	8	40
Total	7	100	13	100	20	100

The highest rates of convictions were as a result of stealing at the rate of 40%. Drug trafficking, abusing family members, child neglect and prostitution were the second at the rates of 10%. Cases of assault, robbery, rape, arson and destruction of property followed at the rates of 5%, 10% of the juveniles stated that they were young when the family members were convicted so they did not know the crimes they had committed. The family members mentioned in these crimes were mainly fathers, a small number of mothers and elder brothers.

The Role of Families in the Rehabilitation Process of Juvenile Delinquents

4.7 Responses of Parents on their Involvement in the Rehabilitation Process



Most of the parents at the rate of approximately 52.4% stated that they were not involved in the rehabilitation process of the juvenile delinquents. Some stated that they learnt of the whereabouts of their children just a few weeks before release when they were called by the schools and asked to send fare for their children; while others were visited by the rehabilitation school staff a few weeks to their release and informed that their children would be released to the family. A parent of a boy who had been released from Kabete Rehabilitation School after rehabilitation stated:

“It was so stressful when a staff visited us and informed me that my son would be released from the rehabilitation school in three weeks’ time. I did not know where he was all this time. We were in bad terms with him because of his behavior. I was relieved when the police informed me that he had been arrested and had a pending case in court. I was not ready to accept him back to the family as the staff indicated. This boy was a ‘black sheep’ in the family and I did not want him to teach his younger siblings bad behaviors, he being at the hands of government was safe for us.”

Parents at the rate of 47.6% stated that they were involved in the rehabilitation process of the juvenile delinquents. The involvement however was very minimal they since they were mainly called upon to provide basic needs for the juveniles such as books, shoes, medication, visiting them in schools once in a while and attending the annual open days.

4.8 Responses by Parents on Family Involvement in the Rehabilitation Process

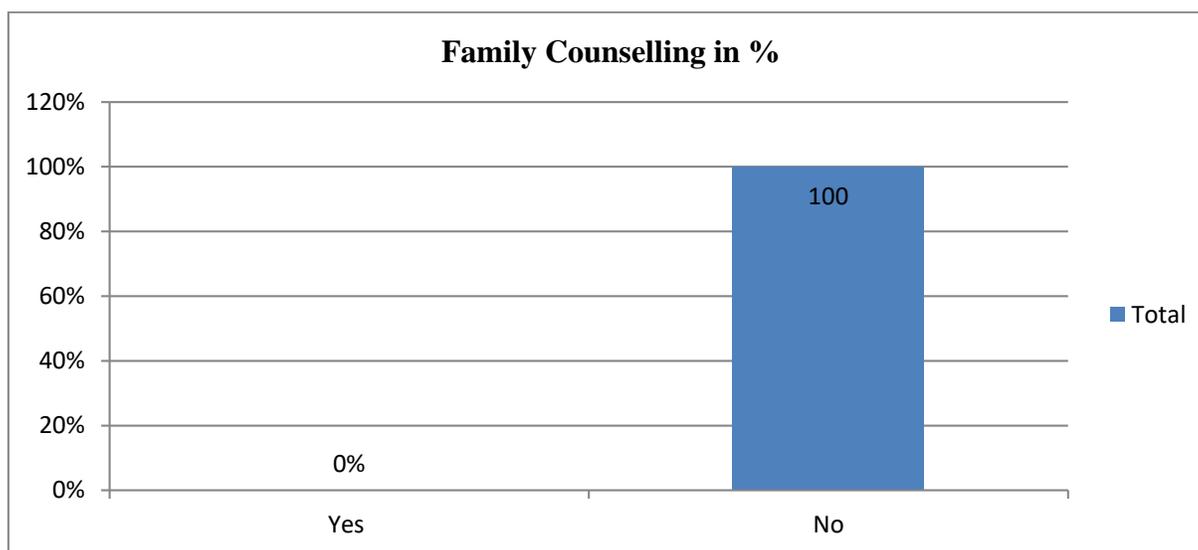
Family Involvement in Rehabilitation	Kabete		Kirigiti		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Attending parents annual open days only	2	20	0	0	2	12.50
Visiting while in rehabilitation school occasionally	4	40	5	83.35	9	57.25
The family was never involved, but was informed a few days before reintegration	3	20	1	16.67	4	25
Phone calls by my child	1	10	0	0	1	6.25

Total	10	100	6	100	16	100
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Most parents (57.3%) were involved in the rehabilitation process by visiting their children while at the rehabilitation schools, 12.5% were involved by attending annual open days, while 6.3% were involved by phone communication with their children. However they had not visited them while at the rehabilitation schools. This is an indication of minimal involvement of families in the rehabilitation process of juvenile delinquents. Those who visited their children at the rehabilitation schools stated that they were given time to see their children but the staff never updated them on the progress of their children.

Parents (25%) indicated that they were never involved in the rehabilitation process in any way but they were informed by the staff a few days before the release of the juveniles from the rehabilitation schools.

4.9 Family Counseling During and After Rehabilitation



All the parents interviewed stated that they were not involved in any form of counseling during and after the rehabilitation of the juvenile delinquents. Some parents however stated that their children received counseling while at the rehabilitation schools but no one else in the family received any form of counseling.

4.10 Family Support During the Rehabilitation Process

Family Support	Kabete		Kirigiti		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Regular communication and provision of basic needs	9	19.17	17	32.65	26	26.26
I have nothing to do with them, they hate me	1	2.13	2	3.84	3	3.03
I have never communicated with them	8	17.04	10	19.20	18	18.18

They advise and encourage me to change	8	17.04	7	13.44	15	15.15
Frequently visit me	19	40.47	10	19.20	29	29.29
They have never visited even though they keep promising to	2	4.26	5	9.60	7	7.07
They are seeking my release since they believe I have changed	0	0.00	1	1.92	1	1.01
Total	47	100	52	100	99	100

The highest number of juveniles (29.3%) stated that their families frequently visited them during the rehabilitation process of which 40.5% were boys and 19.2% were girls. More boys were visited by their families compared to the girls. Kabete had annual open days where parents were invited to attend and this was not the case in Kirigiti. This encouraged regular contact and visits by the families at least once per year even though not all parents attended the open days. Juveniles at (26.3%) stated that they had regular communication with their families and also provided their basic needs of which 17.2% were boys and 36.7% were girls indicating that more girls communicated and received basic needs from their families compared to the boys. Only 1% of the respondents stated that their families believed they had fully changed and they were seeking for their early release from the rehabilitation school.

Juveniles at (18.2%) had never received any support from their families since the time they were admitted to the rehabilitation schools and they had never communicated with their families, while some families (17%) for boys and (19.2%) for girls did not know the whereabouts of their children. Others (7.1%) stated that their families had never visited them even though some kept promising they would visit; as a result some felt that their families no longer loved them while 3% of the juveniles stated they had nothing to do with their families and they were still bitter about the fact that they were not living with their families. A girl aged 14 years who had not yet reconciled with her family stated:

“I hate my parents, my mother took me to the police and she has never visited me, my father is always drunk and never cares about us. My parents never provided for our basic needs, if they would have met our basic needs I would not result to stealing”.

5. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The relationships between the families and the juvenile delinquents before they were arrested and committed to a rehabilitation school were very bad but they improved significantly after the juveniles were committed to the rehabilitation schools and were engaged in the rehabilitation programmes which included counseling. Cases of violence at home were high and most of those that had experienced violence at home never reported those cases. Cases of family members who had been convicted after committing a crime were also reported and most of the cases reported were stealing with fathers reported to have committed most of those crimes followed by elder brothers and very few cases of mothers.

On the involvement of families in the rehabilitation process, most of the parents reported that they were not involved in the rehabilitation process by the rehabilitation schools and most of those that were involved were mostly involved in provision of basic needs for the juvenile delinquents by sending money while at the rehabilitation schools and occasionally visiting them even though the staff never committed their time to address family issues and the progress in the rehabilitation of the juveniles. Family counseling/therapy was never conducted for the families of the juvenile delinquents and this was very key in the rehabilitation process since family was the primary socialization agent for the juvenile delinquents as this would help in the rehabilitation of the juveniles and their families.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:-

- 1) There is need to conduct mapping of the services available to the juvenile delinquents and their families at the community level during the Juvenile Justice System process.
- 2) Family therapies should be included in the rehabilitation programme and it should be done during rehabilitation process of the juvenile delinquents and after release from rehabilitation schools.
- 3) Families should be fully involved in the rehabilitation process since they play a key role in the socialization process of the juveniles.
- 4) Family conferences of the juvenile delinquents and their families should be encouraged as this would help in reintegration of the juveniles with their families and the community.
- 5) Leave of absence for the juveniles while at the rehabilitation schools should be encouraged, as this would assist in preparing the juveniles, their families and community to receive them after release.

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