

Analyse what factors make young people vulnerable to gang involvement

By Adam Pawlak & Brychan Gilson

Introduction

- Young people can be pulled into gangs for many different reasons. For example, social and economic factors, medias influence and psychological factors just to name a few.
- Gang involvement has an impact on not just young people but everyone around them, including family members and other communities.
- In this presentation we will discuss and analyse all the key and important factors that make a young person vulnerable to gang culture.

Social and economic factors

- Research from Cochrane collaboration indicate that young people don't get involved in gangs through a single factor, its multiple factors, for example poverty, weak family support and social exclusion Fisher, Gardner, Montgomery (2008).
- Vulnerable children that face these multiple factors are targeted by the county lines because they represented as cheap, easily recruitable, 14 – 17 year old boys , as they are more likely to be expelled by schools Windle, Moyle, Coomber et,al (2020) , these findings show that the vulnerable boys aged 14-17 are most vulnerable and going back to Fisher, Gardner and Montgomery (2008), these boys with additional social and economic factors like living in poverty or being excluded from school mount up to be a ideal target to gangs.

- [James Windle](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8367-2926) [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8367-2926 james.windle@ucc.ie](mailto:james.windle@ucc.ie), [Leah Moyle](#), and [Ross Coomber](#)

Medias influence

- A major impact on young people involved with gangs is media influence. Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann et al, (2003) states that there are many different ways that cause the chances of violent and aggressive tendencies. For example, video games and music play a big part in this. The reason games and music can make these tendencies so acceptable are because they make it look normal which would increase the chances of young people getting involved in gang culture.
- We see in the research by Thompson, Young and Burns (2010) that social media is making gangs seem more important and powerful than they actually are. This would appeal to the younger people as they might find it an easy way to get influence and gain a lot of status for themselves, making them vulnerable to gangs.

Family & Home Environment

- Multiple criminological studies have demonstrated that young people who have experienced the breakdown of their family have a higher chance of committing crime than someone's family that has stayed intact Skarohamar (2009)
- Jannet A (2015) implies that the breakdown of the family can lead to a plethora of issues one being gang involvement as a lack of a father figure / role model they look for it within the gang.
- Jannet A (2015) also found that the family can also be a catalyst for a multi generational gang, so they are born in the gang and it's their only way of life.

Lack of opportunities

- Research from Fisher, Montgomery, Gardner show that a lack of opportunity has a major impact on younger people. We can see this where it says that gangs can help fulfilling the youths economic troubles that are not legitimate labour markets. This means that young vulnerable people who cannot access jobs and education have a higher chance of turning to crime and gangs, because they are an alternative way of getting payed and having any sort of income.
- Another great point is about the anomie and strain theory. This suggests that people who are not fortunate enough to have good income and success through legit ways, have a much higher chance of turning to things that they do not want to. Such as gangs as they can provide a good enough income for them and gain a status which then they could use to make more money.

Adverse childhood experiences

- Results from Wolf T.K (2020) found that people that have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences at a young age has a larger effect on them joining a gang at the age of 18, this implies that the younger a person is which experiences trauma has a link to joining a gang but they acknowledge that it is not the only reason.
- Hochstetler A et,al (2017) found that Adverse Childhood Experiences can differentiate with an individual's ethnicity, for example someone from a white ethnic background can have a different traumatic impact on their Adverse Childhood Experiences, and going back to Wolf T.K (2020) can impact how early they join a gang or commit serious crimes.
- Both these findings show that there is a clear link that adverse childhood experiences and people joining gangs at a young age and how different ethnic backgrounds can although have the same trauma but they experience it differently resulting in them joining gangs either earlier or later.

• ;

Peer Pressure

- Peer pressure plays a massive role on the youth and how they are pressured into gang involvement. For example, a study by Adeniyi (2021) shows that peer pressure on gang behaviour actually has a 'significant influence'. This suggest that younger people might have a higher chance to get involved with gang activities as they would be getting influenced by their peers. This could have many reasonings behind them like being able to fit in, scared of the consequences of rejection just to name a few.
- Another great statement is provided to us by Michelle and Campbell (2011). They state that friends have a massive role peer pressuring each other to get involved in gangs. Suggesting that young people are affected greatly by their groups and have a higher chance of being encouraged to do criminal activities, This could be so that they can fit in. This shows that peer pressure has a massive impact and shapes the behaviour of others.

Conclusion

- To conclude there are multiple factors that influence young people into violent gangs, some are external factors like the media, peer groups and socio-economic factors, but there are internal factors like family and Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Although everyone with all these factors are not guaranteed to make young people part of gangs but they are factors that can push young people into this lifestyle.
- Young people that are involved in gangs that faces adverse childhood experiences are also more likely to join a gang at 18 , for a plethora of reasons and criminologists like Durkheim believes that the break down of the family is the main reason people turn to crime/deviant activities.

References.

- Gardner F , Montgomery P, Fisher H (2008) ' Opportunities provision for preventing youth gang involvement for children and young people' vol 7 (16), pp 1 – 19 available at: DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007002.pub2.
- James W, Leah M, Ross C (2020)'Vulnerable Kids Going County: Children and Young People's Involvement in County Lines Drug Dealing Youth Justice' vol 20, pp 64-78 available at:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473225420902840>
- Jannet A (2015) 'Family and neighborhood risk factors that influence youth to become involved with gangs' pp 1 – 55 available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1717575392/AC27CBC5511943AFPQ/1?%20Theses&accountid=130472&sourcetype=Dissertations%20>
- Wolff T.K , Baglivio T.M, Kelvin J.H, Piquero R.A, DeLisi M, Howell C.J (2019) 'Adverse childhood Experiences (ACEs) and gang involvement among juvenile offender: assessing the mediation effects of substance use and deficits' 1(18), pp 24-53. Available at: <https://www.scopus.com/results/citedbyresults.uri?sort=plf-f&cite=2-s2.0-85067880074&src=s&imp=t&sid=b309f7dd4226dcf035ec81e74ffe355f&sot=cite&sdt=a&sl=0&origin=inward&editSaveSearch=&txGid=4d7788345455cb579a77bba232b5478f>
- Hochsteller A, Kusow A, Heirings H.M, Alcala J, DeLisi M (2017) 'Adverse childhood experiences, commitment offense, and race/ethnicity: Are the effects crime, race and ethnicity specific' (14) pp 1 – 12 available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/14/3/331>

References

- Adeniyi, O, W. (2021) Influence of Peer Pressure on Gang Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Osun State, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2(3), pp 171-177. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.131>
- Anderson, A, C., Berkowitz, L., Donnerstein, E., Huesmann, R, L., Johnson, D, J., Linz, D., Malamuth, M, N., Wartella, E. (2003). The Influence of Media Violence on Youth. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4(3), pp 81-110. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1529-1006.2003.pspi_1433.x
- Michelle, S., Campbell. (2011) Youth gang membership: Factors influencing and maintaining membership. *Master of Social Sciences (MSocSc)*. <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/6065>
- Fisher, H., Montgomery, P., Gardner, F. (2008) Opportunities Provision for Preventing Young Gang Involvement for Children and Young People. *Campbell Systematic Reviews: Better Evidence for a Better World*, 4(1), pp 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2008.8>
- Thompson, Y, C., Young, L, R., Burns, R. (2010) Representing Gangs In The News: Media Constructions Of Criminals Gangs. *Sociological Spectrum*, 20(4), pp 409-432. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02732170050122620>