

2

**Neglected Crime Prevention Mechanisms and Rural Youth in Sri Lanka**

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**Abstract**

Similar to other countries, it is forecasted that a significant number of youths related delinquent behaviors are related to violence. This situation is much more different in rural context with the constant background of the society in Sri Lanka when comparing inconstant policies. Despite the neglected crime prevention mechanisms which should be imposed through the policies, study will explore what are the appropriate crime prevention mechanisms applicable to youth in the rural context and provide recommendations. Hence, the study explores the appropriate crime mechanism of the rural context to prevent and control crime by the youth and study aimed to provide some recommendations which combat the delinquency in rural context. The study is based on 386 youth between the age of 18-24 in Madirigiriya and Uwaparanagama which have the highest rural context

according to the statistics. Researchers have used cluster sampling to reach the appropriate sample and selected some officials as the key informants of the study. The study has adopted a descriptive research method including qualitative and quantitative data analysis by using SPSS (Version 24) and epinfo. Further, study has revealed that characterises of the growing economies and the resources available to rural youth have a higher impact on the crime tendency. Further, industrialization and the background built with the concepts induce youth to delinquency. Further, agricultural matters and the contemporary lifestyle with the available resources to rural youth have a high impact on increasing the crime rates in the rural context. Further, the study recommends the Kronoberg model as the best crime preventive model for rural youth as a preventive mechanism in Sri Lanka.

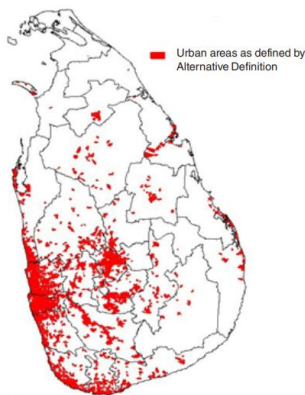
**Keywords:** *Crime Prevention, Life style, Mechanism, Rural, Urban context, Youth*

## **Introduction**

A numerous study has been conducted regarding the crime prevention in urban settings due to the high accelerating crime rate in those areas and some theories also presented from the 1930s based on the developing industrial cultures of countries. Accordingly, a myriad of mechanisms suggested by the researchers as a remedy of crime prevention.

Sri Lanka is a middle income economy with a visibly high rate of urbanization and grand plan for further urbanization through the envisioned Western Region Megapolis Project (WRMPP, 2016). However, it is emphasized that only 18.2% of the population live in urban areas and 77.4% live in rural context and semi urban contexts. The rate of crime events is increasing in all developing countries due to the transformation of capability and majestic lifestyle and also due to poor socio-political and environmental conditions (Rathnayake, 2015). But these statistics are much debatable due to the poverty ratio, prevailing economic crisis and the other determining factors. Considering the prevailing economic situation in Sri Lanka, the rural population for 2021 was 17,977,378, a 0.9% increase from 2020. Further, the World bank states that the country is urbanizing faster than the statistical figures suggest' (World Bank, 2020). As such 'it is important to introduce a realistic definition of urban areas taking into account the characteristics of the population rather than based on administrative considerations alone' (DCS, 2014). Nonetheless, this situation is a bit controversial, and a serious issue raised when applying crime prevention methods to the particular contexts. There is no universally accepted definition for 'urban' and 'every country defines "urban" independently' (UNESCAP, 2013). Further, many researches address some areas of Sri Lanka as urbanized and present crime prevention modules.

### **Map No. 01- Urban Areas as per the alternative Discussions**



Source: Weerathna, 2016

Accordingly, there are urban, rural and semi-urban mixed areas in every district and an issue applying the urban Crime prevention method. The rate of crime events is increasing in all developing countries due to the transformation of capability and majestic lifestyle and also due to poor socio-political and environmental conditions (Rathnayake, 2015). Further, the crime rate in Sri Lanka has been increased from 4.38% in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). Crime does not dissolve with the time and appropriate mechanisms should be suggested.

Sri Lanka is usually famous as “ignoring crime prevention method is a Sri Lankan Policy” (Colombo Telegraph, 2018). It is a Republic in which the commitment for the eradication of crime, takes one of the least priorities. A critique arises as Sri Lanka tends to ignore all the policies and neglect implications after agreeing the declaration on crime mechanisms. Even the Human Rights Protectors argue that there is a low priority to eradicate crimes against Children and Youth (Fernando, 2018). This is that a serious policy for eradication of crime is very dangerous to many people who occupy high positions and to those who make their money, due to low priority given to crime elimination. It is well evident that Policy Mechanisms to crime prevention are not well efficient. Hence, the study explores possible and most appropriate crime mechanisms of the rural context to prevent and control crime by the youth and study aimed to provide some recommendations which combat the delinquency in rural context.

### **Literature review**

Violence and addiction to drugs and alcohol are common crimes that are mostly visible within the rural youth (Ceccato, 2015). Depending on the contexts, these natures do not play an important role in crime prevention in the rural youth life styles. So, it is crucial to implement different mechanisms by considering the nature of the environment. Although different strategies are implemented to tackle crime, violence, and addiction, the role of community is identified as fundamental to the prevention of crime and substance abuse among youngsters. Some actors, such as schools (Shears et al, 2006) and local collaborations (Albert et al., 2011).

Agriculture is one of the prominent livelihood strategies available for rural youth in Sri Lanka; nevertheless, they are less likely to pursue agriculture in the contemporary world (Samaraweera, et al., 2019). Land use is one of the foremost environmental factors that cause an increase in the crime rate Ludin (2013) mentioned that “land use planning plays a crucial role in creating a balance between the needs of society, physical development and the ecosystem”. Further, land use in Sri Lanka is rapidly changing with accordance to the needs and requirements of the

society. Hence, this land use concept cannot be limited to the urban areas as it is well affected by the semi-urban and rural development phenomena. The literature relating to environmental criminology also reveals that a connection between opportunities for land use and crime exists (Wickckramasighe, 2021). Those studies have further indicated industrialization and its effects on social wellbeing. This mainly involved engaging in a “modern form of research in aerial and ecological traditions” which forms the initial links with the geography of crime (Herbert, 1982). In addition, the purpose of land use plays an important role in occurring crime incidents. For instance, Chicago school found that crimes like robberies were driven in selected commercial land use features like liquor stores, restaurants and bars in Chicago (Twinam, 2017) which leads to an increase in the crime commission around these particular areas. In addition, studies have also found that the probability of juvenile crimes and child-sex offenses taking place is much higher near educational institutes (Wickckramasighe, 2021). It is well emphasized that various crime types occur due to the situational factors such as; time, precipitation, motivation and the victim-offender relationship.

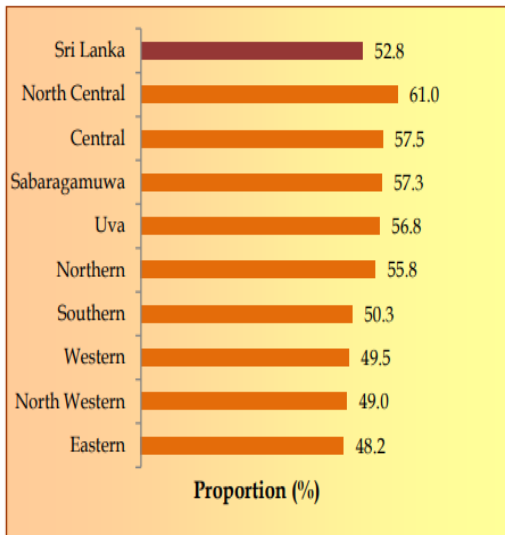
Despite neighbourhood characteristics, family demography into the adolescent crime and delinquency literature to consider how family instability shapes young people’s secondary exposure to violence in a time and place marked by high (Cavanagh & et.al, 2018). Community participation is a basic mechanism in crime prevention which considers association of the family takes a foremost place in this process (Raazdan, 2006). Further, ‘getting young people busy’ in the Kronoberg model is recognized as an effective mechanism worldwide (Manaliyo, 2016). The Kronoberg model is a preventive mechanism which aims to prevent youth from consuming drugs and alcohol in public places which assist to reduce youth violence in rural settings. This method was vastly used by crime preventionists in European countries and obtained effective results (Ceccato, 2015). In addition, this mechanism was vastly used to control the delinquent behaviours of youngsters including vandalism, theft, violence etc. However, family participation in controlling violent behaviour of their children is efficacious.

## **Methodology**

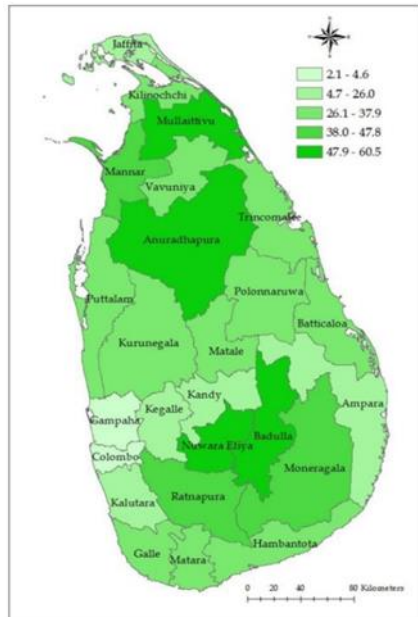
The study has adopted a descriptive research method including qualitative and quantitative data analysis parts to explore the geographical and community considerations which act against the crime prevention in rural youth. According to the highest unemployment rate of the youth and higher agricultural exposure by the district Madirigiriya in Polonnaruwa district and Uwaparanagama in- Badulla district have been selected as the study area. Further, age category of the youth of

male and female between 18-24 taken as the research sample excluding factors of employability, educational background. In reference to the educational qualifications of the selectees, any of the youth along with any educational fields will be eligible to join the sample of this Research. In this respect, prior to the finalization of the sample, the researcher studied the relevant reports available at Divisional secretariat / Grama Niladharie's offices and relevant Police stations while also following the clustery sampling method.

**Figure 1.4. Youth unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment of employed population in agriculture sector by districts the province**



Source: Sri Lanka Labour force Survey, 2020



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Accordingly, a pilot survey was carried out to identify the proper sample of the respective areas and as the primary data gathering tool, a questionnaire was developed and moderated. Accordingly 2% from the rural population of Madirigiriya and Uwaparanagama considered and 217 respondents and 169 respondents were selected from Madirigiriya and Uwaparanagama respectively. Further, the primary informants were interviewed by using open ended and close ended questions. Some case studies revealed by the officials and the parents of the youth were considered. Primary data and secondary data were analysed through SPSS (Version 24) and Epiinfo and presented through charts and graphs.

### Findings and Discussions

According to figure 01. Most male youngsters are employed in Garments and some of them are employed in industrialized zones. 72% of the total have not continued further studies due to the economical hardships and the responsibilities they adore as taking care of parents and female siblings. Further, the second highest category reflects the self-employed youth who are taxi drivers (Three wheel) and farmers. Highest number of females are employed as garment workers and others engage in household work due to the family responsibilities they play.

**Figure 01. Nature of youth**

Main activity		Gender		Total N=386
		Male	Female	
Student (Full time)	Frequency	39	16	55
	%	10	4	14.2
Employed	Frequency	78	57	135
	%	20	14	34.9
Self- employed	Frequency	63	11	74
	%	16	0.2	19.17
Seeking a job	Frequency	48	20	68
	%	12	0.5	17.6
Engage in household activities	Frequency	15	35	50
	%	0.3	0.9	12.9
Unable to work	Frequency	3	1	4
	%	0.7	0.25	1.03

**Figure 02. Delinquent behaviour reported within 6 months of period (18.08.2021-18.02.2022)**

Action	Frequency	SD	Link between the Society (Mean)		
			Family	Peer Group	Society
Youth violence	89	4.8	0.6	2.8	2.1
Consumption of substance use	61	3.9	0.5	3.1	1.1
Vandalism	14	0.9	0.2	4.5	3.8
Gang culture	36	2.1	0.2	4.6	2.9
Domestic violence	96	5.0	2.6	3.7	1.2
Theft	71	4.1	0.9	3.9	2.7
Sexual crimes	18	1.4	1.4	2.6	2.1

Source: Police statistics and field survey 21/22

Rurality is directly connected with agriculture and Ceccato (2016) states that it is a common phenomenon to neglect the studies related to agricultural crime which are visible in developing countries. Specially the theft (2.7) of cows and cattle is a widely recognized crime and further theft of livestock of all kinds of crops and machinery tools cannot be neglected. It is well-evident that youngsters are highly influenced for theft by the peer groups (3.9) and the society (2.7).

Drug production is also reported as an organized crime which occurred by the contribution of youth. In addition, this crime was mostly committed by the juveniles during the past two years. Cannabis is the widely grown plant and the majority was influenced by the peer group (3.1). With respect to the violent crimes committed by rural youth, assaults, sexual incidents and homicides have arisen from the statistics. When considering the literature, it is a good movement in Sri Lanka to show the low tendency for rape commission by rural youth. Accordingly, Remaswamy, (2013) state that rape is one of the most common crimes against women in India and it has one of the highest mortality rates of girl up to the age of 5 in Asian countries (Solotaroff & Pande 2014). The greatest figures of violence crime were reported by the female youth in rural contexts. In addition, premature ages, bride price- giving dowry and mating of children are widespread problems. Further, causes which are rooted to poor education, lack of resources and the low social status of female rural youth.

Illegal gambling is another form of delinquent behaviour which is common among youth. Similarly, consumption, substance use and addiction (3.1) can occur during this peer group association (4.6). Further can develop gang societies which leads to further crime incidents. Hence, youth who are highly associated with peer groups and slightly connected with families tend to commit crimes more than others. It is shown that association of peer groups and loss of family affection can highly impact delinquencies. Further, families emphasize an effective responsibility in crime control and prevention.

Specially, community has a special role in directly and indirectly preventing controlling youth from crime and violence. Hawkings (1999) presented a concept called Communities That Care (CTC), which empowers communities to organize themselves in crime prevention planning. More deeply the norms of the communities act against the substance use (drug and alcohol) and lead a preventive model against the addiction. Further, study identified that under-age young people are carrying and consuming substances including drug addiction. This situation usually reflects from the rural community due to the characteristics adored by the

context. the rural neighbourhood is always curious and “have an eye on” the next person. This community norms favourable to prevention of consuming of substances.

Preventing youth violence is another challenger in growing communities. Some Researchers emphasized the benefits of applying a youth empowering mechanism. Specially, the youth who dropped out of school tend to create gangs and join as taxi drivers have a higher tendency to engage in violent behaviour. The gang culture creation led to grave crimes due to the delinquencies of the members. According to the study, the “Busy youth” concept reduces violent behaviours and stakeholders need to create opportunities to implement this concept.

It is well evident that the geographical areas represent a mix urban, semi-urban and rural context in some districts. The main challenge occurs when the neighbourhood is characterized with messy urbanization which leads to the behavioural changes of the residents around these concepts. Due to the disorganized urban factors the repercussions may lead the rural youth to adopt the same messy behaviours including vandalism, gang violence and other crime. Even the poorly designed built environment may cause the tendency of crime rates. Even when fulfilling the basic needs of the rural youth, such as planning, designing and establishing a hospital in a region, crime prevention strategies shall be adopted. The taxi-culture created around the hospital can expand the free youth into the particular area and facilitate opportunities for the crime tendency. Further study revealed that 15% - 20% of crimes occur due to the environmental design, public spaces and isolation availability.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Economies are going through rapid changes, not only developments, urbanization but also economical backwards and structural changes of the society. Researches state that policy makers should address the agricultural crimes and youth related issues which will highly affect the future economy. However, the crime tendencies of rural youth have significantly increased over time due to the limited access to resources, economic changes and the changes of the built environment. In addition, rural and remote areas become more visible in crime because of the urbanization of neighbourhood areas. This may result in a higher likelihood of becoming the target of rural crime. Hence the ordinary crime prevention mechanisms are not appropriate to the constant nature of the background. Further, Sri Lanka is unable to implement proper mechanisms at a National level. The study demonstrates the collaboration of parents to crime prevention of rural youth is more efficacious. Further, Kronoberg



model application is recommended by the study due to its process and the high success rates of the application in the contexts which recorded higher number of delinquencies. Crime prevention mechanism is regulated with the involvement of the police officers and the assistance of the parents to reduce the youth violence in rural settings. If the parents are incapable of providing assistance police officers are entitled to contact social services. Further, Community Police officers focus on the people who illegally sell substances or procure alcohol for young people. Investigation process against alcohol peddlers is documented and followed up by the officers. This reflects the general method of enforcing law against the suspect, but the model offers a structure and systematically demands sources and actions to overcome such crimes.

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