The Situation of Juvenile Delinquents and Prevailing Challenges in the Correction Center: The Case of North Gondar Adult Correction Center

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Abstract
Jailing juvenile delinquents with adult inmates resulted different physical and psychological challenges on juvenile inmates. The purpose of this study is to explore the situation of juvenile delinquents and rehabilitation services in adult correction center, the case of North Gondar correction center. The study employed qualitative research approach with case study research design and social constructivism research paradigm. For the accomplishment of the study, twelve purposively selected participants (nine juvenile delinquents, and three key informants) were involved. The data were collected through in-depth interview, key informant interview, document review, and observation. The gathered data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and themed into meaningful interpretations and analyzed thematically.

The finding of the study showed that juvenile delinquents experienced physical assault/ abuse, psychological abuse and learned additional offences. Absence of separate dorms for children, lack of effective rehabilitation service provisions and re-integration, lack of age limitation for juveniles and overcrowding are found out as challenges for effective rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents though four rehabilitation programs i.e. counseling, medical service, vocational training and formal education are being provided in the correction center. Thus, the study implies the need for policy enforcement, integration of other and social work professionals in the correction center to manage cases and protect juvenile delinquents from harm.

Key Words: Juvenile Delinquency, Preventive, Rehabilitation, Correction, Detention

Introduction
Juvenile delinquency is a growing social problem that has received wide recognition in recent years (Muncie, 2004). According to Muncie (2004), the number of boys and girls brought to the attention of the juvenile courts or the police because of delinquent behavior have mounted sharply, and their offences are often serious. The juvenile justice system aimed at the well-being of the juvenile delinquents and shall ensure that any reaction to juvenile offenders shall always be in proportion to the circumstances of both the offenders and the offence (UN Minimum Standard Rule, 1986). Besides, International Juvenile Justice Observatory (2014) contributes to the efficient strategies, which promote the international development of appropriate policies, legislations, and methods of intervention within the context of harmonization of juvenile justice systems all over the world. Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (2012) under the title of preventive detention and out of home placement, revealed that residentially placed youth are not receiving adequate services and it is because of professionals in the institution are not certified professionals (like counselors). This office in another study (2017) suggested that program management, healthcare services, facility security, and intervention management have significant inverse relationships with recidivism. This result indicates the importance of the operation of need institutional facilities for juvenile delinquents and underscores, for quality healthcare for institutionalized populations, and standardized juveniles’ treatments in the institution have important contribution in addressing the rate of recidivism. However, this study mainly focuses on the predictive factors of juvenile recidivism in the institution and fails to discuss the programs/mechanisms that allow prison management to treat juvenile delinquents before they become recidivist.

According to Wollan (1941), any system which permits a long delay between the commission of a delinquent act and the initiation of treatment, gives the delinquent a false impression of the relationship between his/her act and its consequences that is the whole event is permitted to grow cold
before anything is done about it. Flore (2003), in his study revealed that treatment, services, and intervention programs that target these very young offenders offer an exceptional opportunity to reduce the overall level of crime in a community. On the other hand, Kumneger (2015), also suggested that treatment or services of children in conflict with the law is rehabilitation, reintegration and community-based correction which diverts children away from the formal justice system into community-centered social education. However, the above listed studies lack to see the other dimensions of juvenile delinquents; than mainly focused on suggested services. Besides, Betelhem (2004) revealed that the treatment provisions to juvenile delinquents vary from health examination, educational, and training services, counseling, and detention to remand home in Addis Ababa. Nevertheless, she fails to see the experiences of juvenile delinquents in the institution than specifically focusing on the child friendly court system. On the other hand, Molalign (2012) conducted his research on the assessment of the determinant factors for juvenile delinquency in Gondar correction center and revealed that there are problems in juvenile justice system that lacks qualified judges, and the absence of juvenile court with in distinct jurisdiction is revealed as contributory causes for the increment of the problem. But his study is limited to assess the rehabilitation services and experiences of juvenile delinquents in the adult institution than focusing on determinant factors.

However, the above-mentioned studies conducted on the juvenile delinquency have limitations, they mainly focus on some separate programs. Of which some of them were gender specific, the rest of the studies conducted are on separate rehabilitation center or remand homes of juvenile delinquents, and they fail to address juvenile delinquents’ experience in the adult institution. Therefore, this study assessed the challenges of juvenile delinquents and rehabilitation services in adult correction in the case of North Gondar correction center.

Study Design

To primarily understand perceptions and views of participants in a natural context, qualitative research approach with case study method for descriptive purpose is employed. As Stated by Creswell (2007), multiple case study helps the inquirer to illustrate the issue and show different perspectives on the issues. Therefore, to show the multiple subjective experiences of juvenile delinquents in the adult correction, the researchers choose this research method. Qualitative data were collected from twelve purposively selected participants (nine juvenile delinquents, and three key informants) through in-depth interview and key informant interview. The data were collected through in-depth interview, key informant interview, and document reviews. The researchers used the assigned pseudo names and codes in order not to use their real name of in-depth interview participants and key informants respectively. The gathered data were transcribed, coded, categorized and themed into meaningful interpretations and analyzed thematically. Besides, secondary data were used to compare the findings of this research with the previous similar undertakings.

Results and Discussion

Background of the Study Participants

As clearly illustrated in the table1 bellow, the in-depth interview participants’ background is presented based on their gender, age, duration of stay in the correction center, educational level, family situation, and types of offences they committed. Besides, the background of key informants is presented in the table 2 bellow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Duration of Stay in the Center</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Family Situation</th>
<th>Types of Offences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abebe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemma</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Stabbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adane</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No family</td>
<td>Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desta</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Background of Key Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Year of work Experience</th>
<th>Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KII-1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Diploma in Management</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII-2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Degree in psychology</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII-3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Diploma in TVET</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Correction Directive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiences of Juvenile Delinquents in Adult Correction Center

The finding of the study revealed that juvenile delinquents are experiencing various challenges in the adult correction center. As to the all Key informants and six of the in-depth interview participants described that detention of juvenile delinquents with adults exposed to live stressful and difficult life in correction center. Ultimately, Juvenile delinquents are experiencing physical, psychological abuses and exposed to learn newer skills to commit additional offences though they are expected to be rehabilitated. This would be triggered due to the existing challenges in the correction center: lack of separate room for juvenile delinquents, detaining juveniles with high level criminal adults.

Physical Abuse

The results of key informant and in-depth interviews indicated that detention of juveniles with adult criminals exposed minors to witness and experience physical. Frequently practiced forms of physical abuse are being beaten and punched in their faces, due to fighting that one gets into just by living together with other inmates. With this regard, the in-depth interviewee, Tariku, described as follows:

You know it is difficult to be here and consider yourself as you are detained plus waiting for the remaining days, months, or years. You do not have freedom to move as you want plus that you cannot even speak if someone hurts you or something else happened to you. In these seven months, I faced many challenges, among those challenges, people are on fight every night, and you may be part of that fight/beatings. One day while inmates are on fighting, I also tried to defend myself and get into fighting. And in-between my inmate’s teeth have got ten broken. Then, I am punished to pay 3000 birr and it is really misery/horrifying to be in prison.

According to Tariku’s description, being in the correction center and being detained with adults makes one’s life tough, horrible and stressful besides, Juveniles are psychologically intimidated due to fear of subsequent sever punishments when they report abuse and related bullying to the officials of the center, and this makes life more challenging. As Lemma, one of the juvenile delinquents described, this scenario is not only unique to Tariqu, rather he has experienced too though he has explained it in slightly different fashion:

Emmmmm...(Silence)...adult inmates are bad. The first day I came here, I was assigned to dorm 12 and when I asked them, they took me to the felony’s dorm. Not only this since we are in one dorm, we may face fight/beaten up. I personally being beaten up several times, because the inmates are in quarrel and fight every night even if we are not that much hurt, we will be part of that fight and beatings.

As it is indicated above, being placed in similar dorm with adults and existence of frequent fights at night make juveniles to take part in fighting though they don’t want to. As in-depth interviewee revealed that delinquents become part of /quarrel fight just not only due to their...
The study also found out that juvenile delinquents are not only experiencing physical abuses but also, they are facing psychological abuses during their stay in the correctional center, in fact, both forms of abuses are mutually existent. With this regard, key informant interviewee-2 described as psychological abuse is common phenomena. It is noted that newcomers are predominantly exposed for psychological challenges and difficulties, partly due to they are strange to the correctional center, and adults’ intimidation that increase psychological burden which in turn results to stress, depression and sometimes-suicidal ideation among long term convicted/sentenced juvenile inmates. In similar note, in-depth interviewee, Tarkiu, has also shared such experiences. Key Informant-2 has narrated the exposure of juvenile delinquents to psychological abuse and challenges as follows:

When we see the psychosocial well-being of juvenile delinquents, they are at risk. The juvenile delinquents those who had good well-being or functioning in their psychological and social aspects, may face some disorder when they came to the correction center, because they detained with 120 inmates and most probably, they may arrested/detained with adults, elders and mentally ill inmates, so they face challenges and health problems. Detaining with adult make them at risk but there are mentally retarded inmates, when they share the same room, juvenile delinquents are always in tension; feel stressed, or may develop anxiety.

This implies that not juvenile detention with adult inmates only expose juvenile delinquents to psychological difficulties but, their detention in the same room with mentally retarded inmates expose them to additional health problems and this creates psychological difficulties on juvenile delinquents. Similarly, the interview results from Key Informant-3 also supported the above discussions with slight difference and presented as follows:

Juvenile delinquents’ detention with adult inmates affects them in many ways; particularly, if it is for the first time for them to be in the correction and they may face different challenges. For example, psychologically, juvenile delinquents experience stress, depression, and anxiety; due to this, they sometimes experience suicidal ideation and this affects them negatively or makes their stay in the correction difficult even worse.

As described in the above narrative forms of both key informant-2 and 3, it is pronounced that delinquents who shared rooms with adults are facing many problems and severity of these multiple psychological consequences will be highlighted for delinquents with first time detention experiences. Boldly, it was indicated that stress, anxiety and rare suicidal ideations are commonly expected psychological problems that emanated following juvenile delinquents’ exposure to different forms of psychological abuse by adults in the correction center. Furthermore, the in-depth interviewee, Mekonin, strengthened and supported the nature of abuse and by sharing his experience as follows:

I started to experience abuse and intimidation as soon as I entered to the correction center. When I entered to the assigned room adults frightened me “????????” I brought some cloths, but they order me to give my clothes for them and agreed to sell my cloths to get money. It is difficult to live with adult inmates in one room because they are older than us and they have different experiences and skills of committing crime. Even physically, some of their physique is frightening and this made us tensioned and stressed. Thus, Even, I cannot refuse their order if they want to do so.

It is found out that, the very essence of adults welcoming behavior is reflected their psychological supremacy and bullying. As the first impression has potential to last, the behavior of the very moment is influential and in this regard intimidating and lets the juvenile delinquents live difficult and dependent life in their stay in the center. These abusive and exploitative behaviors of adults created unpleasant social environments and undesirable psychological development among the young offenders due to possible threats and terroirs forwarded from adults.
Learning Additional Offences

The finding of the study explored that correctional center is playing unintended role of teaching better skills of committing advanced crimes rather than re-socializing them in a productive manner. All key informant interviewees have assured that juvenile delinquents get access to learn additional offences from adult delinquents and they organize themselves within and outside of the correctional center, which is contrary to ultimate goal of the correctional institution. Because other than deterring criminal behavior of Juvenile delinquents, it results in the increment of re-offending or recidivism. In line to this, KII-I described juvenile delinquents’ learning additional offences as follows:

Since juvenile delinquents are detained with adult inmates, they get access to learn different undesirable criminal behaviors. As juvenile delinquents spent much of their time with adult criminals, they may learn revenge, techniques of committing other serious crimes and they may organize themselves for other criminal activities when they are released form correction. Due to this, we are observing the increment of re-offending among juveniles from time to time.

This indicates that juvenile’s recidivism is increasing following their access to share techniques and information from adult criminals with better skills of criminal activities. It can be imagined that when people have frequent interaction and intensity of contact with each other, the likelihood of sharing and internalizing each other’s behavior is high. Thus, juvenile delinquents, spending much time together give them chance to organize and initiate them to avenge or commit advanced criminal activities. Similarly, KII-3 described socializing effect of correctional institutions to increase recidivism among minors as follows:

Juveniles are kids or they are like white paper, they may learn the adult’s way of delinquent acts. May be being with adult criminals able them to learn the tactics and techniques of committing crime and this is the dread/worry for the correction center. Currently, the issue of recidivism or reoffending is the most challenging things for the correction. There are twice or three times re-offenders and these juveniles have made criminal acts their jobs. That is why they are repeatedly visiting the correction.

As boldly, described juvenile delinquents visit correctional center in their early age and exposed to learn better tactics from their adult inmates and this made correctional institutions to produce advanced re-offenders as a result of its latent effect. All key informant interviewees agreed on the increment of juvenile recidivism, which resulted due to sharing experiences from adult inmates and juvenile delinquents in the correction which helped them to organize themselves with other offenders. Beside to this, KII-2 added there as on behind juveniles' recidivism as follows:

If we are talking about how juvenile delinquents’ experiences are affecting their future life after detention, first we have to know how many people are in the correction and where these inmates came from. You know there are 23 woredas in North Gondar and all criminals of these woredas are detained here. So, they share ideas and different techniques of crime. What we are worried about is that in mates may share experiences especially from those felonies. When they came from different places and detained together rather than being rehabilitated, they organize themselves for crime. To know its reality there is a high level of recidivism among adult inmates and juvenile delinquents. I think the reason is, here everyone treated the inmates as cheater, or other types of offences as offender, by saying do not came here again. Moreover, the society do not accept him/her in good condition then the released inmates may do not have other choices than returning to their former practice.

As it is elaborated in detail above, the way criminals are rehabilitated and treated in the correction center are not adequate and positively framed. Regardless of the type crimes committed by juveniles, they are negatively regarded and lacked positive image from members of center and the community at large because of negative frame of reference once they are labeled. And this in turn makes them involved in criminal activities as they are framed to act in criminal mentality and develop other criminal behavior. And thus, maltreatment in the correction and negative stereotype from the community are other basic reasons for juveniles’ recidivism. In similar way, Adane, the in-depth interviewee explained his tendency of learning additional offences stating that he doesn’t think as brighter future in the correction will be seen and doesn’t believe that he will be rehabilitated; instead, the environment invites him adapt criminal behaviors and engage illegal activities.
Challenges in the Correction to Rehabilitate Juvenile Delinquents

Lack of Separate Dorm for Juvenile Delinquents

As it was discussed in the above sections, juvenile detention with adult delinquents or delinquents with serious offences, paved the way for juvenile with simple crime to learn techniques for additional criminal acts in addition to being exposed to different forms of abuses. Theoretically, juvenile delinquents are supposed to be placed either, if possible, in separate correction center or rooms with their age alike inmates. But it was understood that minors are forced to live with adults in the same dorm due to lack of separate dorms form them in the study area. Below stated explanation of key informant interviewee (KII-1) could be assurance for their existing condition in the correction center:

Even if legal framework suggests separate or special treatment/services provision for juvenile delinquents, there is no separate correction center/remand home that is built for juvenile delinquents, even at region wide. But there is a plan to have a separate correction center for juvenile delinquents at the regional level. In this center, though, as juvenile delinquents deserve separate treatment and special attention is noticed, the structural designs of buildings are not favorably built. Thus, juvenile delinquents are detained with adult inmates sharing the same room.

It can be understandable from the above narration that, initially, the correction center was built to accommodate only adult inmates without considering juvenile delinquents. Jailing minors with adults then, creates multitude of problems and challenging situations for delinquents. The In-depth interviewee, Haile, has elaborated below the stressfulness and shocking nature of sharing dorms with adults:

We live with older/adult inmates and we share the same room but I did not face anything that may hurt me or something else yet. It is somehow stressfull when they quarrel each other. I sometimes get frustrated and think that what if they seriously fight and come to hurt us, I felt shocked when such things happen.

This implies that even if juveniles are not hurt physically when they are detained with adult inmates in the same room, but frustration, psychological instability and uncertainty about their future life in the correction is noticed. And this makes juvenile delinquents’ life miserable and challenging due to existing dormitory and other ineffective service provisions in the center.

Service Ineffectiveness

The findings of this study indicated that ineffective service provision to juvenile delinquents and absence of appropriate discharge of respected duty were one of the major challenges in the correction center that hindered proper rehabilitation of delinquents. The interview results of KII-2 has showed this and presented as follows:

Peoples who are in the position are not willing to provide the essential services, and I can say that no one performs his/her responsibility effectively, as it is required from them. I think the center should have to work on the effective service provision system that help to rehabilitate the delinquents since the existing services provisions and commitments can’t succeed the desired goal of correctional institution.

Besides to what has stated above, key informant interviewee (KII-1) supported that absence of effective and qualified service provision mechanisms, and education to rehabilitate delinquents resulted in increasing of recidivism, and he stated as: “what makes juvenile delinquents to involve in criminal acts again/recidivist is that; lack of effective rehabilitation services or education in the correction”.

Lack of Age Relevance/Limitation and Re-Integration

The absence of age relevance/ limitation in the correction center is also investigated as one the major challenge to rehabilitate delinquents through age appropriate treatment mechanisms: and this is clarified by the key informants that criminal code’s age limitation is not being implemented in the center and stated as follows by KII-2:
Emmm…according to the guidance and counseling of the center, we called juvenile delinquents those between the ages of 15-30 and we use this age category for reports. But based on the Ethiopian Criminal Code juvenile delinquents are those between the age of 9-15 and sometimes under the age of 18, but in this correction, it is only found in theory, practically it is not like that.

Furthermore, KII-1 stressed that age limitation between adult and juvenile delinquents is vital for providing necessary services for delinquents based on their level of maturity, and all key informants mentioned that the correction does not have specifically determined age limitation for juvenile delinquents, and they categorized depending on the way it makes sense for them in working process, which is presented as follows:

In this center there is no limited age for the juvenile delinquents because the prosecutor sends them without identifying them as juvenile delinquents. We categorize them as juvenile or adult delinquents based on the assessment we made when they came here in the first place. In general, there is no stated or limited age for juvenile delinquents.

The findings of the study also revealed that absence of preventive mechanism programs and lack of re-integration are major challenges that raised recidivism among juvenile delinquents in the correction center. As KII-1and KII-3 suggested below, the absence of preventive mechanism programs and lack of re-integration are the significant challenges for the currently prevailing criminal activities among juveniles. Because the community and correction center collaborative role have significant contribution for preventing crimes among juveniles. However, lack of re-integration and following up of juvenile delinquents’ situation after release make juveniles lead worse life than before and this could have been discussed in the correction before release of delinquents:

There are delinquents that make criminal act their day to day activity, this is the most challenging and put the effectiveness of service provision and issue of re-integration under question. After they are released, we do not know where inmates are going and the correction does not have the habit of checking the effectiveness of service provision and improvements on inmates.

Thus, absence of re-integration programs/services for juvenile delinquents and lack of evaluating service effectiveness in the correction aggravated the tendency of recidivism among juvenile delinquents.

Discussion

Juvenile delinquents in the adult correction experienced, physical assault/abuse, psychological intimidation and exposed to access of learning additional offences. Juvenile in Adult Prisons and Jails (2000), indicated that the most disturbing aspect and well-founded fear among the thousands of young people due to their placement in adult prisons and juveniles are more likely to be raped, assaulted, and commit suicide. Children placed with adults were twice as likely to report being "beaten up" by staff and the social costs of imprisoning young offenders in adult facilities may be paid in later crime and violence upon their release. Participants of the study revealed that juvenile delinquents are forced to experience abuses and assault in adult correction center, which implies the existence of severe problem of detention together. Similarly, Bimal (2015) stated that continuous threat of victimization is having a serious impact on the socialization of young men and on their internalization of the norms and values of the larger society. Young people who are at risk of becoming delinquent often live in difficult circumstances. Placing youth in adult institutions accentuates criminal behavior after release. Jailing youth with adult felons under spartan conditions will merely produce more street gladiators (JAPJ, 2000).

Overcrowding is a critical issue in the correction because it is related to so many others problems. The effects of overcrowding permeate every aspect of institutional operation, including health issues, education, suicidal and assaltive behavior, and over reliance on restraints and disciplinary measures (Justice Policy Institute, 1998). Participants of the study revealed that overcrowding and low standards of the buildings are the possible challenges in the correction rehabilitate juvenile delinquent.
Implication

The findings of the study implied that a lot has to be done on preventing and rehabilitating juvenile delinquents; and this requires collaborative effort of professionals and practitioners who could be playing the role of case managers, counselors, mediators, community mobilizers, and so forth. Besides, relevance of working as an advocate for respecting children’s right, their well-being, promoting special and separate treatment and stressing on functional re-integration have to be boldly emphasized. Establishing and strengthening systems designed to follow up the enforcement of existing policies on juvenile delinquents and revising them if necessary, need to be considered.

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Reference