

A survey of juvenile delinquency in Chengdu, PRC

(overview essay)

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Abstract: *To survey the situation and reasons of juvenile delinquency within Chengdu city, further to provide underpinnings of preventing juvenile delinquency for the government. In August 2011, Chengdu City Women's Federation, Chengdu City Intermediate People's Court and Faculty of Education of Sichuan Normal University jointly launched a three-year "A Survey of Juvenile Delinquency in Chengdu" research project by conducting archival analysis of trial data, in-depth interview, questionnaire survey. 410 cases randomly selected from 7 courts within Chengdu city involving 519 juvenile delinquents have been surveyed. Finding of this survey research found typical characteristics of juvenile delinquents including low level of education, obvious gender gap, increasing number of student offenders and main characteristics of juvenile delinquency. Property violation and personal injury are major criminal types, gang crime is the main crime modality, and plenty of problem behaviors have been shown before crime.*

Keywords: *juvenile delinquency; juvenile delinquents; crime*

1 Introduction

Juvenile delinquency in China refers to people of over 14 years old and under the age of 18 who have committed a crime, violated criminal law and its relevant provisions. According to article 17th in criminal law, criminal responsibility age is over 14 years old; for the people are below 14 years old, they are not criminally responsible age is not completely; between the age of 14 and 16, it is relative to fulfill criminal responsibility. In short, according to law, for 14 to 18-year-old juvenile delinquents who commit a crime such as murder, intentional homicide or injury, rape, robbery,

drug trafficking, arson, explosion, poisoning and other serious damage to the society, they must fulfill corresponding criminal responsibility.

Juvenile delinquency is a major social problem and is becoming more serious the worldwide, which has been listed as the third public nuisance after taking drugs or drug trafficking and environmental pollution. The number of juvenile delinquents is increasing year by year, and there is a series of tendency characteristics such as younger juvenile delinquency, more complicated subject of crime, more criminal types, more violence, and more gang crimes.

So many juveniles' growth dreams are broken by committing a crime, and so many families' better future is destroyed, too. In recent years in China, the vicious crime, especially cases of violent crime and organized crime are rising, which prompts criminologists, sociologists and educators to conduct researches for investigation and analysis reasons of juvenile delinquency, to radically reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency, and promote their healthy growth.

This survey maps the situation and reasons of juvenile delinquency within Chengdu city, further provides basis of preventing juvenile delinquency for the government. In August 2011, Chengdu City Women's Federation, Chengdu City Intermediate People's Court and Faculty of Education of Sichuan Normal University jointly launched a three-year "A Survey of Juvenile Delinquency in Chengdu" research project.

Chengdu is the provincial capital city of Sichuan province, with a population of 14,047,625 (2010), which is located in the southwest of China. It is a representative medium developed city comparing with highly developed urban regions like Beijing, Shanghai, or underdeveloped cities in mid-west region of China.

The team conducted archival analysis of trial data, in-depth interview, questionnaire survey to discover reasons of juvenile delinquency and further investigated their family education. So far, 410 cases of juvenile delinquency from 2007 to 2011 involving 519 juvenile delinquents have been surveyed. Those cases were randomly selected from 7 courts within Chengdu city including Chendu Intermediate People's Court, Shuangliu People's Court, Jintang People's Court, Dujiangyan People's Court, Pengzhou People's Court, Wuhou District Court, and Qingyang District Court. Meanwhile, 150 juvenile delinquents were also randomly selected to complete questionnaire of parent raising behavior and 12 of them and their parents were interviewed one by one. Because time is short, research has not yet been finally completed, only part of the study results shown as follows.

2 Characteristics of juvenile delinquents

2.1 Demographic characteristic

Age distribution and criminal type

Due to the reasons of earlier development, negative culture influence etc., since 1990s the initial age of juvenile delinquency was 2 to 3 years ahead of the 1970s. In recent years, the number of people below the age of 14 who commit intentional homicide, rape, robbery, drug-related crime which cause serious damage to the society is increasing. According to the analysis of subject of crime, age distribution is as follows:

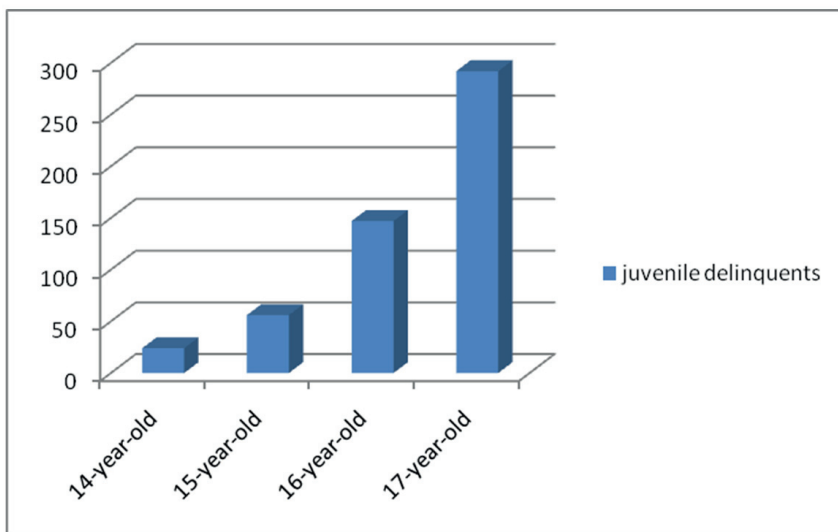


Figure 1: Age distribution of juvenile delinquents

As Figure 1, 24 juveniles committed crime at age of 14, 56 juveniles committed crime at age of 15, 147 juveniles committed crime at age of 16, 292 juveniles committed crime at age of 17. Criminal types are illustrated in Table 1 and numbers of juvenile delinquents were embedded in parentheses.

Table 1: Criminal types and numbers of juvenile delinquents

14-year-old	property violation	robbery(14)
	personal injury	intentional homicide (7), intentional injury (2), rape (1)
	other types	0
15-year-old	property violation	robbery (36)
	personal injury	intentional homicide (8), intentional injury (10), rape (2)
	other types	0
16-year-old	property violation	robbery (59), stealing (33), snatching (4), extortion (3)
	personal injury	intentional homicide (11), intentional injury (26), rape (2), gang fighting (2), picking quarrels and making troubles (3)
	other types	manufacturing drugs and drug trafficking (2)
17-year-old	property violation	robbery (102), stealing (64), extortion (2), financial fraud (1), cheating and bluffing (1)
	personal injury	intentional homicide (30), intentional injury (52), kidnapping (1), rape (4), forced prostitution (1), gang fighting (5), picking quarrels and making troubles (12)
	other types	manufacturing drugs, concealing drugs and drug trafficking (9), involving criminal syndicate group (2), traffic offences (1)

As the growth of the age, juvenile's scope of life experience is in development, which makes the increasingly diverse criminal types involving artificial intelligence by using computer technology or science.

Obvious gender gap

Comparing with females, males are the main subject of crime, the statistic analysis of 4 years (2007–2011) juvenile delinquency in 7 courts including Chendu intermediate people's court, Shuangliu people's court, Jintang people's court, Dujiangyan people's court, Pengzhou people's court, Wuhou district court, and Qingyang district court demonstrated criminal numbers of males and females as shown in the figure below.

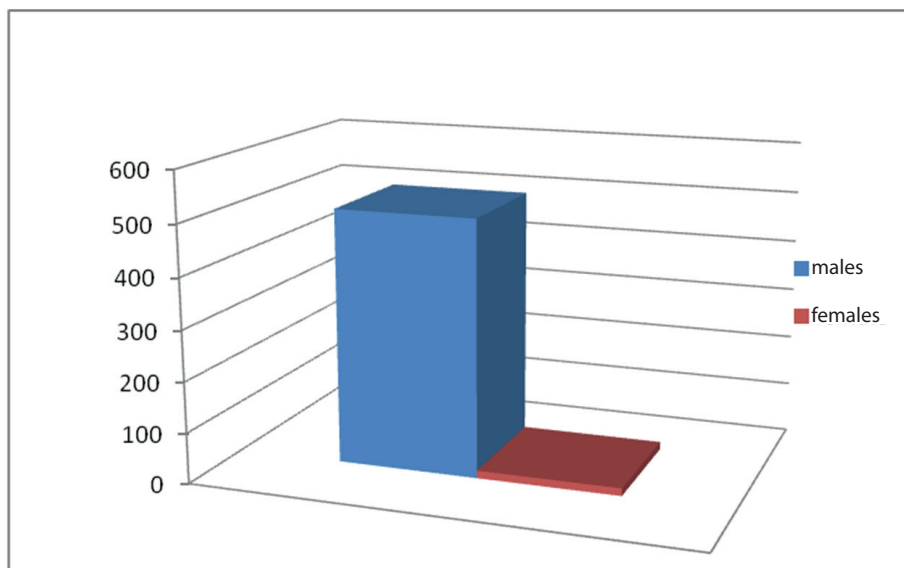


Figure 2: Gender gap of juvenile delinquents

Among 410 criminal cases, contrast with 504 males, accounting for 97.11 % of the total number of 519 people, 15 females account for only 2.89 %.

Low level of education

This study found that educational level of juvenile is strikingly low, even most of them did not finish 9-year compulsory education. A large number of 285 juveniles own junior high school level of education, accounting for 56.55 %; 141 juveniles own primary school education, accounting for 27.98 %; 30 junior high school drop-outs, accounting for 5.95 %; 19 high school drop-outs, accounting for 3.77 %; 18 technical secondary school drop-outs, accounting for 3.57 %; 5 primary school drop-outs, accounting for 0.99 %; 3 college drop-outs, accounting for 0.60 %; 3 illiteracy, accounting for 0.60 %.

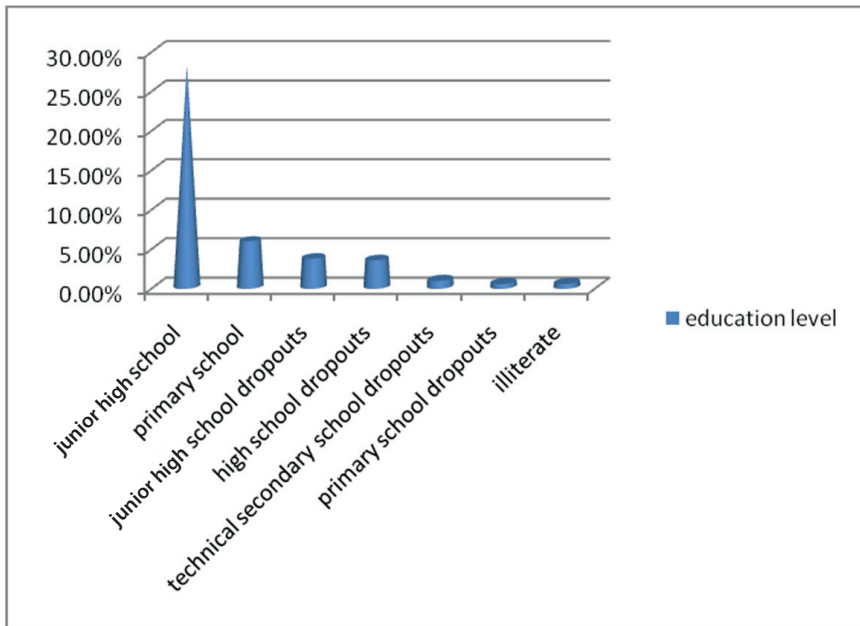


Figure 3: Educational level of juvenile delinquents

The level of education is limited by the age of juvenile, however, drop-outs committed crimes with a relatively high rate and most juvenile delinquency involves unemployed youth. According to data from 2007 to 2011, the public security organ in China transferred juvenile offenders for examination before prosecution, 56.55 % of them accept junior high school educational level, 29.57 % of them accept lower level of education (primary school, primary school drop-outs, illiterate). In another word, a total of 86.12 % of them did not complete compulsory education.

Most subjects of juvenile delinquency are jobless

From age of 14 to 18, teenagers develop rapidly and become much stronger than before, they engage in daily activities to consume energy. Otherwise, they are easy to deviate from normal growth orbit.

When most children are enjoying study life at school, most juvenile offenders are struggling at school and then leave school early. Labor law in China forbid employers to recruit under the age of 16, in addition to the fierce competition in the job market, many juveniles who left school are jobless.

To examine occupation of the juvenile, when we firstly divided them into two categories, students and non-students, the study found that the ratio of the number between them is 7.95 : 1. When we further divided non-students into the unemployed, working, farmer, it was found that 229 juveniles, accounting for 44.12 % of the total number of crime are unemployed.

Going back to the roots, on one hand, these non-students lack of school regulation; on the other hand, usually they are unskilled, pleasure-seeking but expect something for nothing, the juvenile eventually commit an offence.

Second only to the type of unemployed juvenile, a large number of the working juvenile come from countryside, engaged in security, house decoration, shoe factory, water works, haircut, construction site and other unstably temporary works.

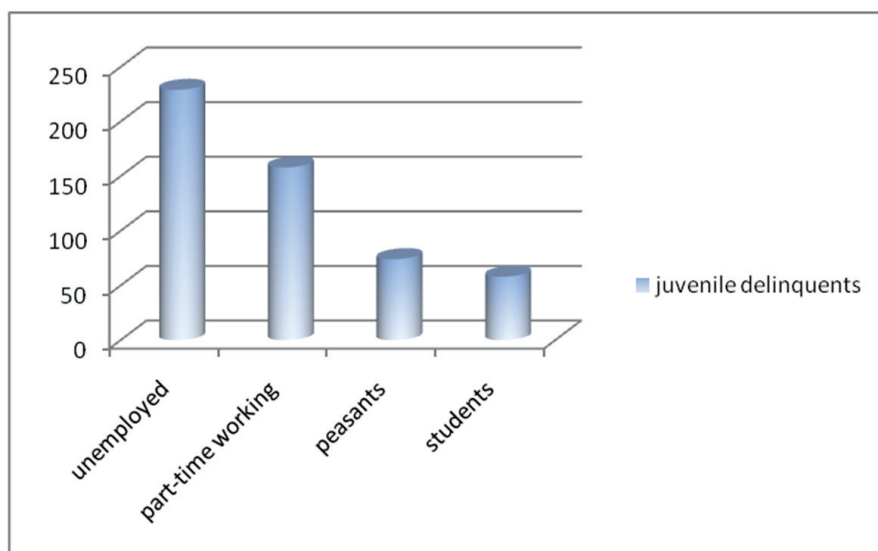


Figure 4: Identity of juvenile delinquents when committing a crime

A growing number of student juvenile delinquents

In the sample of 519 juvenile delinquents, 58 of them are students. As shown in Figure 5, generally the number is rising, with 7 students committed in 2007, 6 in 2008, 11 in 2009, 18 in 2010, and 16 in 2011.

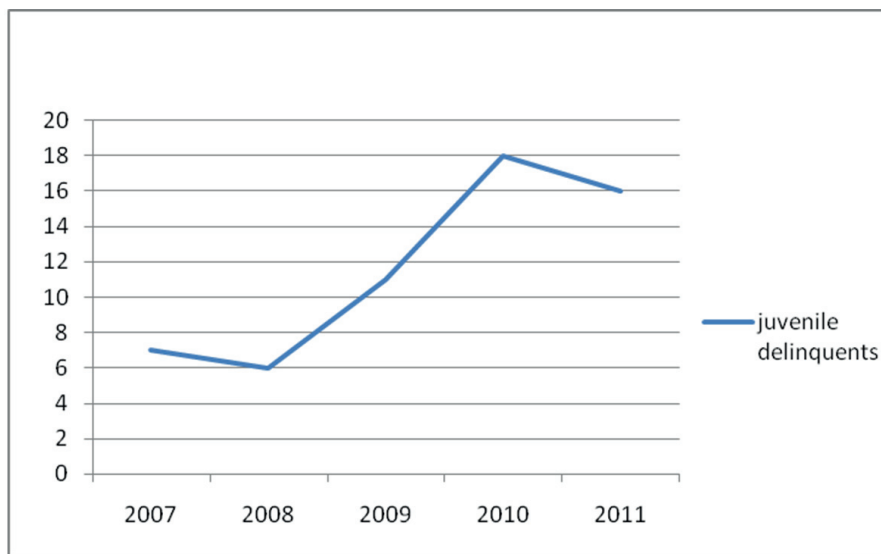


Figure 5: Student juvenile delinquents in 2007–2011

Further review of the distribution of students, junior high school is the main stage of juvenile delinquency. As shown in Figure 6, 2 college students, accounting for 3.45 % of the total of students; 3 primary school students, accounting for 5.17 %; 6 high school students, accounting for 10.34 %; 11 vocational high school students, accounting for 18.97 %. In a total of 29.31 % of them are high school students, however, junior high school students are more than that, accounting for 62.07 %.

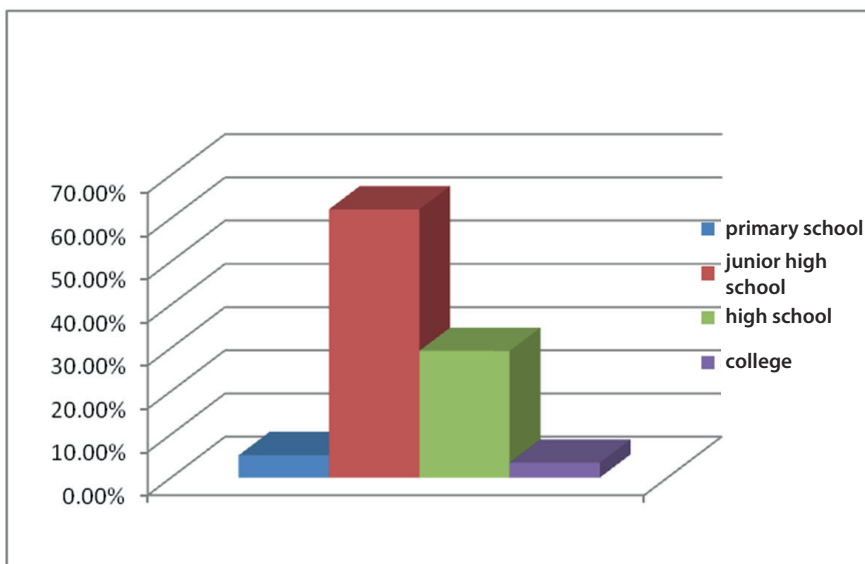


Figure 6: Distribution of student juvenile delinquents

3 Characteristics of juvenile delinquency

3.1 Property violation and personal injury are two major criminal types

Analyzing the selected 410 cases of juvenile delinquency, the result showed that the criminal types are varied, including property violation, personal injury, drug-related crimes, crimes of gangsterdom-related, illegal holding gun and ammunition etc. The two major criminal types committed by juvenile are property violation and personal injury. From the Table 2 below, it can be found that 324 juvenile delinquents committed stealing, snatching, and robbery, which are the three kinds of main crimes involved with property violation; 116 committed crime of personal injury including two main criminal types of intentional homicide and intentional injury.

Table 2: Different criminal types

criminal types		cases	% (N = 410)	criminal population	% (N = 519)
property violation	robbery	130	31.7	207	49.88
	stealing	105	25.61	117	22.54
	extortion	5	1.22	8	1.54
	financial fraud	3	0.73	4	0.77
	snatching	2	0.49	4	0.77
	cheating and bluffing	1	0.24	1	0.19
	kidnapping	1	0.24	1	0.19
	total	247	60.24	342	65.9
personal injury	intentional injury	69	16.83	77	14.84
	intentional homicide	34	8.29	39	7.51
	gang fighting	12	2.93	12	2.31
	picking quarrels and making troubles	11	2.68	11	2.12
	rape	7	1.71	7	1.35
	concealing	2	0.49	3	0.58
	injury	2	0.49	2	0.39
	kidnapping	1	0.24	1	0.19
	forced prostitution	1	0.24	1	0.19
	illegal detention	1	0.24	1	0.39
	total	140	31.46	154	30.44
Others	drug trafficking	6	1.46	6	1.16
	illegal holding gun	4	0.98	4	0.77
	involving criminal syndicate group	2	0.49	2	0.39
	transport of drugs	2	0.49	2	0.39
	illegal possession of drugs	2	0.49	2	0.39
	manufacturing drugs	2	0.49	2	0.39
	concealing drugs	1	0.24	1	0.19
	covering up or concealing	1	0.24	1	0.19
	traffic offences	1	0.24	1	0.19
	shelter others taking drugs	1	0.24	1	0.19
	illegally holding ammunition	1	0.24	1	0.19
	total	23	5.61	23	4.43

3.2 Gang crime is the main crime modality

Similar results with previous researches were obtained in this study, 266 of 410 cases involved with 375 juvenile delinquents (72.25 %), accounting for 64.88 % of the total number of cases, gang crime is the main crime modality according to both analysis of number of cases and that of juvenile delinquents.

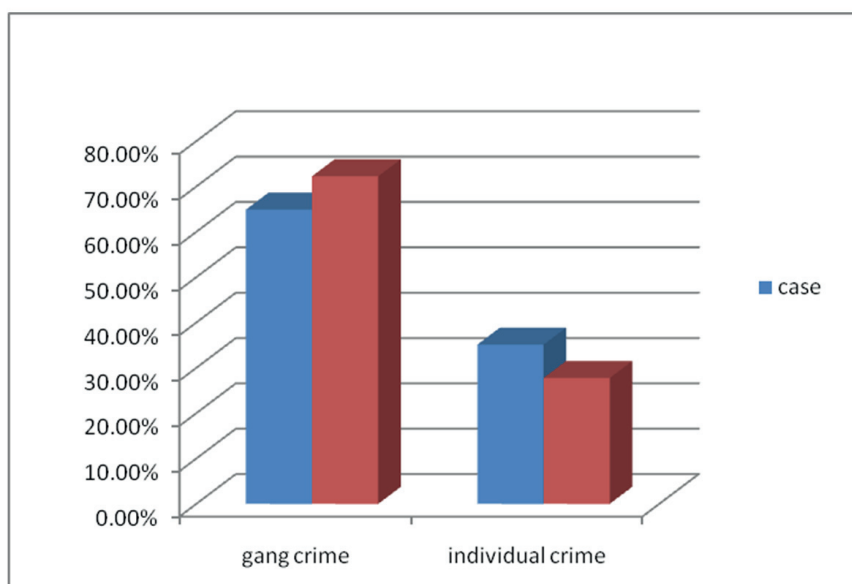


Figure 7: Distribution of crime modality and its juvenile delinquents

It is often very difficult for a juvenile to commit a crime, because both of the strength of the individual and independent ability is poor. Because of the lack of adequate physical strength, intelligence, courage and experience, juveniles gather together to achieve common purpose by encouraging and getting psychological support from each other. From the analysis of some specific cases, juvenile delinquency usually involves at least 3 or even more persons jointly commit crime, the largest number up to nine people in this study, but without fixed organization.

Some typical criminal types are tend to be committed in gang crime such as robbery, stealing, intentional injury, intentional homicide, affray, concealing stolen goods, snatching, financial fraud, involving criminal syndicate group, illegal detention and crime of cheating and bluffing. Crimes of manufacturing drug, drug trafficking, rape, illegal holding gun or ammunition etc. are only committed by individuals in the survey.

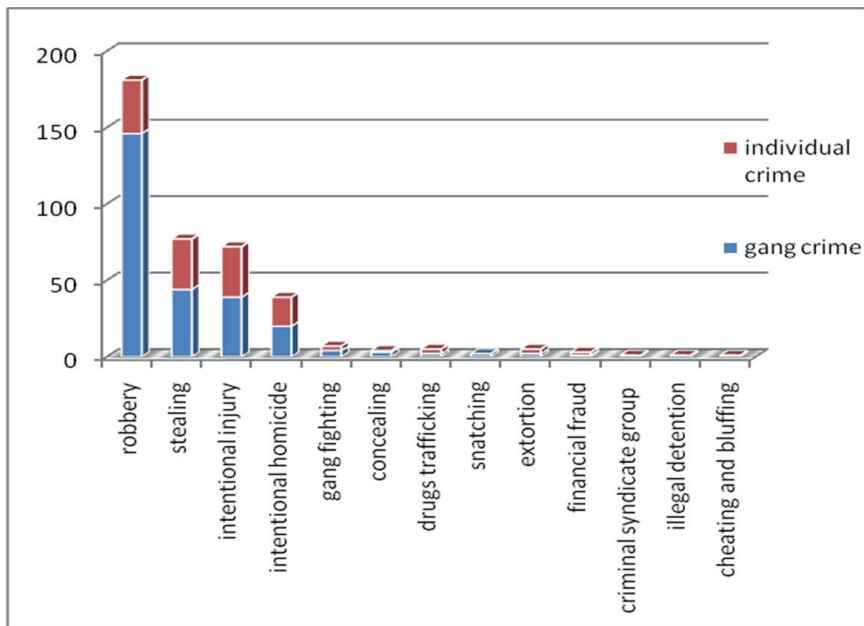


Figure 8: Comparison of juvenile delinquents with different crime modalities

As shown in Figure 8, robbery, stealing, intentional injury, intentional homicide, and gang-related cases are the top four, followed by affray. Both student juveniles and unemployed juveniles in society get involve in these gang crimes, especially in recent years, students and unemployed juveniles in society jointly commit property violation such as blackmail is becoming a new trend of juvenile delinquency.

3.3 Criminal motive is varied, but the sake of enjoyment is one of the main causes

Various criminal motives include material motivation, sexual motivation and emotional motivation such as revenge, jealousy, vanity, curiosity, being afraid of difficulties (see Table 3). The same kind of motive may drive juveniles to commit different kinds of crimes. For example, a juvenile might commit crime of stealing, robbery or even fighting or murder for the sake of enjoyment; in turn, a crime can be caused by different kinds of motivation, a juvenile commit stealing because of curiosity, imitation or being afraid of difficulties.

The purpose why juveniles committed property violation is raising money for luxury, online games. Otherwise, a small number of juveniles committed for living or being persuaded by bad friends to jointly commit crime.

Table 3: Motivation of juvenile delinquency

Motivation	juvenile delinquents	% (N = 519)
sake of enjoyment	272	52.41
Flaunt	62	11.95
Revenge	49	9.44
Brotherhood	43	8.29
Curiosity	33	6.36
Imitation	18	3.47
Forced	18	3.47
Being afraid of difficulties	12	2.31
Ignorance	5	0.96
Unidentified	4	0.77
Erotism	3	0.58
Total	519	100

3.4 Plenty of problem behaviors have been shown before crime

Many previous studies of juvenile delinquency have shown that juveniles show signs of problem behaviors before crime. In the tenth meeting of the ninth session of the standing committee of the National People's Congress, prevention of juvenile delinquency of People's Republic of China was approved. The problem behavior list was as follows: 1) truancy, night out; 2) illegally carrying knives; 3) fighting, and abuse; 4) forced asking others for property; 5) stealing, intentionally damaging property; 6) gambling or disguised way of gambling; 7) watch or listen to pornography, obscene audio and video products, books, etc.; 8) illegally entering into dancing halls and other places; 9) other serious behaviors violation of social morality. Foreign related researches also argue that the following signs of juvenile delinquency: running away from home, drinking, smoking, truancy, violation of curfew, make bad companion, do not accept parents' or teachers' education, early sexual behavior, fighting, stealing, and internet addiction. In this study, juvenile offenders display the following problem behaviors, 1) being infatuated with network games; 2) truancy, night out; 3) fighting, illegally carrying knives; 4) stealing, intentionally damaging property; 5) watch and

listen to pornography, obscene audio and video products, books, etc.; 6) gambling or disguised way of gambling.

4 Discussion

This survey was conducted within Chengdu city in China to understand the situation and analyze reasons of juvenile delinquency, further to provide underpinnings of preventing juvenile delinquency for the government, which involving randomly selected 410 cases from 7 courts and 519 juvenile delinquents.

Finding of this survey research demonstrated that typical characteristics of juvenile delinquents such as low level of education, obvious gender gap, increasing number of student offenders and main characteristics of juvenile delinquency like property violation and personal injury are major criminal types, gang crime is the main crime modality, and plenty of problem behaviors have been shown before crime.

However, juvenile delinquency is a major social problem not only in China but also worldwide, which has been listed as the third public nuisance after taking drug or drugs trafficking and environmental pollution. The number of juvenile delinquents is increasing year by year, and there is a series of tendency characteristics such as younger juvenile delinquency, more complicated subject of crime, more criminal types, more violence, and more gang crimes. Criminologists, sociologists, educators and family members should all cooperate to radically reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency further to promote healthy growth of juveniles.

(reviewed twice)

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