

Delinquent Youths Sociodemographic Characteristics: A Study of 2068 Official Data

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Juvenile delinquency is a critical social problem around the globe. As vulnerable beings, it is critical to understand the reasons behind children's involvement in crime. The aim of the present study is to determine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of juvenile delinquents in North Cyprus. The population of this research is formed by juvenile delinquent cases which are taken from the archival records of the General Directorate of Police spanning 2008-2018 in Northern Cyprus. In this direction, 2068 official police records are examined by quantitative research methods, frequency analysis and Pearson chi-square tests were applied to the data. The findings contribute to understanding the dimensions of juvenile delinquency in the country. Northern Cyprus is not recognised as an independent republic, and compared to other European countries Cyprus still has low crime rates for both adult and juvenile offenders. We determined that most delinquent youths in the 16–17 age group, attending school and mostly involved in property crime. The highest rate of involvement in crime is in the biggest three cities in which both social and physical disorders are highly ranked, while social control is low. Identifying the factors behind juvenile delinquency is vital to contributing to social policies and psychosocial support mechanisms on this issue.

Keywords: *juvenile delinquency, official record, crime*

Introduction

Criminality is one of the main social problems in almost all countries around the world. Crime has become a more visible social problem with the modernisation that started with industrialisation and the globalisation that developed afterwards. Crime is a social but also a universal phenomenon. Acts that qualify as offenses are not the same everywhere; but everywhere and always there were people who acted in a way that brought criminal pressure on them” (Durkheim 1986). As Durkheim states, crime is diverse and can occur anywhere, in any form. Apart from individual will, crime occurs depending on many economic, social and cultural factors. This is also true for children. A child is neither inherently good nor bad. S/he is an individual who changes, develops and interacts with their environment, like every living being. It is their education and experiences that are shaped as a result of these interactions and developments that determine their drive

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to crime. This is an indication that the origin of juvenile delinquency is psychological and sociological.

Since a child is defined as an individual who has not reached full maturity in terms of mental, physical and spiritual aspects, and who is still learning about their roles and duties in society, who needs care and education (Wood et al. 2018, Hacıoğlu 1998), it is accepted that a child's ability to plan criminal acts and to reason about the consequences thereof has not yet developed. The concept of the child being dragged or pushed into crime is used (Polat 2004). Similarly, Yavuzer (2006) states that children are more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviours during childhood because they are still at the beginning of their socialisation process and cannot fully grasp social norms and moral values. It is normal for children, who cannot internalise these norms and values, to exhibit antisocial behaviours, and such behaviours gradually fade with the socialisation process.

For decades, research on juvenile delinquency has been carried out by professional fields such as criminology, sociology, psychology and social work from different points such as investigating the factors that cause juvenile delinquency, examining the rehabilitation and reintegration processes of children and realising the reintegration of children into society with support groups. In present research, we aim to eliminate the lack of data recording juvenile delinquency in Northern Cyprus and to create a profile of children driven into crime in this country, thus understanding the psychosocial factors that push children into crime.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Juvenile Youth

Sociodemographic characteristics of juvenile youth gives a wider and more complete picture of the criminal process. A Turkish study conducted with the aim of creating a profile on children driven to commit crimes was conducted in 2016 by Fırat et al. (2016) and carried out by Adana. The prominent findings of the study are that 228 out of 258 delinquent children were boys, 20% of the children lived in a single parent family structure, 38% of them did not commit the criminal act alone and 52% of their mothers are illiterate. In addition, it is seen that the vast majority of children (45%) are pushed to commit crimes against property.

In the research conducted by the Istanbul Courthouse, the records of 668 juvenile delinquents, determine in which regions of Istanbul juvenile delinquency is most common. In this context, Fatih (27.5%), Şişli (19.3%) and Beyoğlu (15.3%) districts were determined to be the highest ranked. In this sample group, similarly to previous studies, we observed that the majority of the sample (62%) were dragged into crime against property (Gülüm et al. 2017, p. 157).

There are also many publications in the international literature on the prevalence of juvenile delinquency and the profiles of juvenile delinquents. First, the records of 210,599 delinquent children aged 12-17 residing in the United States of America (USA) between 2003 and 2014 were examined. In this study, children who used drugs and were driven to crime constituted the sample. When the findings were examined, it was revealed that there is a 49% decrease in

substance use and a 34% decrease in delinquency (Grucza et al. 2017, p. 1499). As stated in the purpose and importance of the research, such periodic reviews provide important findings about how social problems are progressing; these are also effective in forming future policies. For example, in the aforementioned study, it was concluded that awareness activities surrounding children's substance use were effective and it was necessary to continue in this direction. If there is a decrease in the course of social problems, the policies implemented should be continued, and if there is a contrasting increase, the notion of the revision of existing policies or the creation of new ones can only be put forward with subsequent research.

In another study conducted in the USA in 2017, the records of children under the age of 18 who committed a sexual offence under the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice between 2007 and 2015 were examined. Records of 89,045 delinquent children, including 19,910 girls and 69,135 boys, were investigated. As a result of these examinations, information such as age distribution, ethnic origins, whether they have been in conflict with the law before, whether there is a history of violence in their families and whether the children have special needs are presented in various tables (Levenson et al. 2017, p. 321).

When the studies on juvenile delinquency in Northern Cyprus are examined, only two master theses were found. In her research, Gökem (2008) tried to determine the prevalence and causes of juvenile delinquency by examining the case files of children who lived in Northern Cyprus between 2001 and 2005 and were driven to crime. Additionally, a similar study was conducted by Paşa-Baskın (2011), examining the file records of children under the age of 18 whose cases were tried between 2000 and 2010. Although the aforementioned studies provided information on the profiles of children driven to crime in Northern Cyprus, it is seen that the date range is quite limited and is not based on any theoretical framework. In research, since the date range will be between 2008 and 2018, quite comprehensive data will be obtained.

Method

In this study, the goal was to form a profile of juvenile delinquents in Northern Cyprus in order to understand the tendencies and sociodemographic risk factors surrounding juvenile delinquency. In order to carry out this study, firstly a confirmation by the Ethics Committee of the European University of Lefke was received approving that the study is ethical. After this, official police data were received in an electronic format. Then, quantitative research methods, frequency analysis and Pearson chi-square tests were applied to the data.

Research Questions

As indicated above, sociodemographic features are important on the issue of juvenile delinquency. Thus, sex, age, nationality, occupation are such variables in this research. In context of social disorganization and social control theories, living

area is also an important factor, given the relationship with disorder which is a key parameter for both theories. Therefore, the current study focuses on three research questions:

1. Is there a significant statistical relationship between the social and demographic factors proposed by the current study?
2. What is the relationship between living area and juvenile delinquency?
3. How does crime area relate to social disorganization and social control theories?

Data Collection

The population of this research is formed by juvenile delinquent cases (children's age, sex, family structure, education, residence, nationality, criminal activity) which are taken from the archival records of the General Directorate of Police spanning 2008-2018 in Northern Cyprus. The researchers did not select any particular sample and instead received all records within the period 2008-2018. Because the written records about juvenile delinquents in Northern Cyprus start from 2008, the research is limited by this specified period. As a data collection tool, a questionnaire is formed by researchers. In this questionnaire, there are questions such as children's sociodemographic information, economic characteristics, family structure, educational status, criminal activity and penalty received. Through this data collection tool, secondary data of juvenile delinquents were retrospectively scanned. In total, 2528 records were examined. However, 460 data sets were excluded in the study due to insufficient information.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 was used for the statistical analyses of the data in order to form frequency tables according to age, sex, nationality, residence, occupation and education. Thereafter, Pearson chi-square tests were used in order to compare sociodemographic features with crime types.

Limitations of the Research

The main limitation of the present research is its lack of information concerning written records. While examining the records of juvenile delinquents, we realised that there was only limited information available about their families, education, penalty, addiction, prior victimisation and prior delinquency.

Another limitation is the data timespan, which began in 2008. The researchers could not obtain older data; thus the present study remains limited.

Results

According to Table 1, the majority of the sample (90.8%) was male. More than half of the sample was aged between 16-17 years old. The two largest segments of participant nationality were Turkish Cypriot (42.55%), whilst 42.5% were Turkish. The juvenile delinquents were mostly from Nicosia (34.82%), Kyrenia (22.92%) and Famagusta (22.73%), the biggest cities in Northern Cyprus. The majority of the sample (49.08%) were students, whereas 29.3% of them were unemployed.

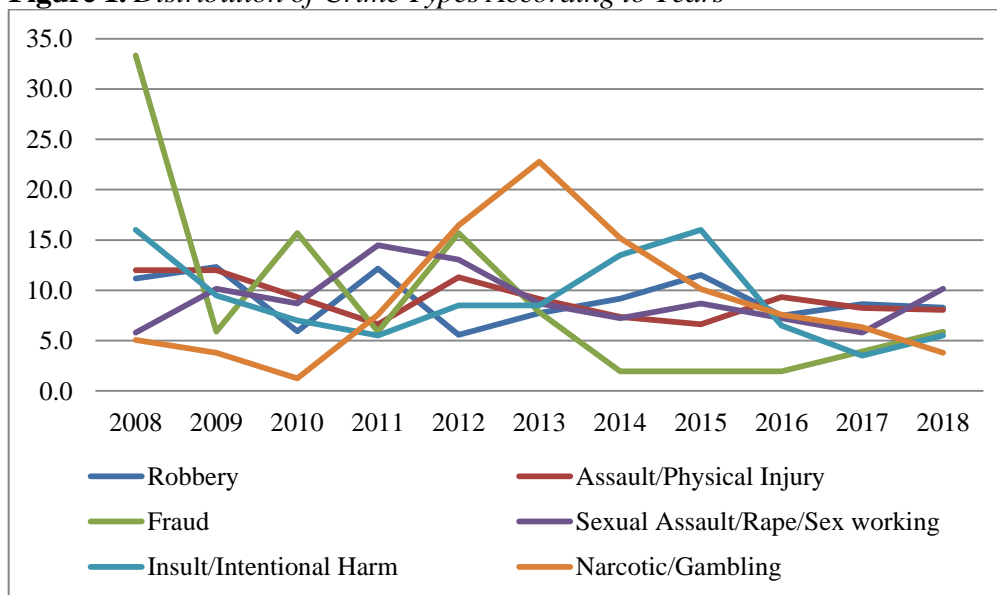
Table 1. *Distribution of Juvenile Delinquents' Sociodemographic Information*

	n	%
Sex		
Female	189	9.14
Male	1879	90.86
Age		
13 years old and under	216	10.44
14 years old	228	11.03
15 years old	355	17.17
16 years old	593	28.68
17 years old	676	32.69
Nationality		
Turkish Cypriot	880	42.55
Turkish	879	42.50
Other	309	14.94
City		
Nicosia	720	34.82
Famagusta	470	22.73
Kyrenia	474	22.92
Morphou	199	9.62
Iskele	156	7.54
Southern Cyprus/Abroad	49	2.37
Occupation		
Unemployed	606	29.30
Employed	447	21.62
Student	1015	49.08

The major crime type (53.7%) was determined to be robbery, followed by physical assault (26.98%). The highest rate of criminal juvenile delinquency was seen in 2008 (12%). With 32.7%, Nicosia, the capital of Northern Cyprus, was the city with the highest crime rates, while Iskele is the lowest (7.79%).

Table 2. Distribution of Juvenile Delinquents' Type of Crime, Year of Crime and Crime Area

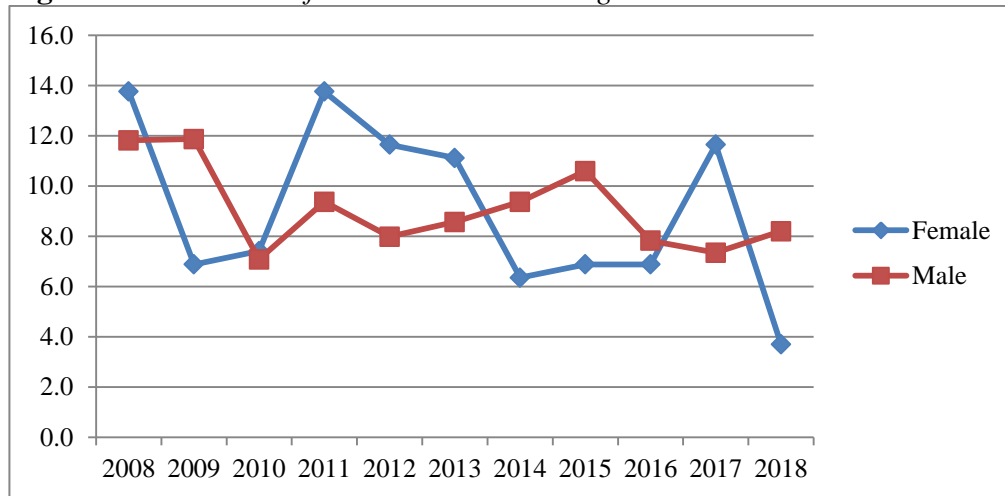
	n	%
Crime Type		
Robbery	1111	53.72
Assault/Physical Injury	558	26.98
Fraud	51	2.47
Sexual Assault/Rape/Sex Work	69	3.34
Insult/Intentional Harm	200	9.67
Narcotic/Gambling	79	3.82
Year of Crime		
2008	248	11.99
2009	236	11.41
2010	147	7.11
2011	202	9.77
2012	172	8.32
2013	182	8.80
2014	188	9.09
2015	212	10.25
2016	160	7.74
2017	160	7.74
2018	161	7.79
Crime Area		
Nicosia	677	32.74
Famagusta	500	24.18
Kyrenia	522	25.24
Morphou	208	10.06
Iskele	161	7.79

Figure 1. Distribution of Crime Types According to Years

In Figure 1, it is clear that fraud is the highest in 2008, narcotic/gambling the highest in 2013 and insult/intentional harm the highest in 2008 and 2015. The data shows sexual assault and rape to be the highest figure in 2009 and 2015. In

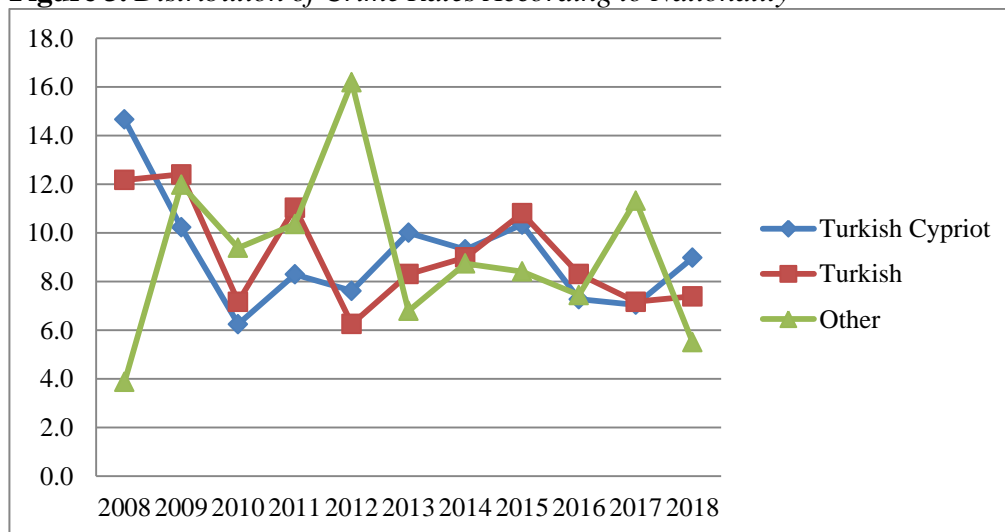
addition, the data clearly indicates a significant decrease in incidents of fraud between 2008 and 2009.

Figure 2. *Distribution of Crime Rates According to Sex*

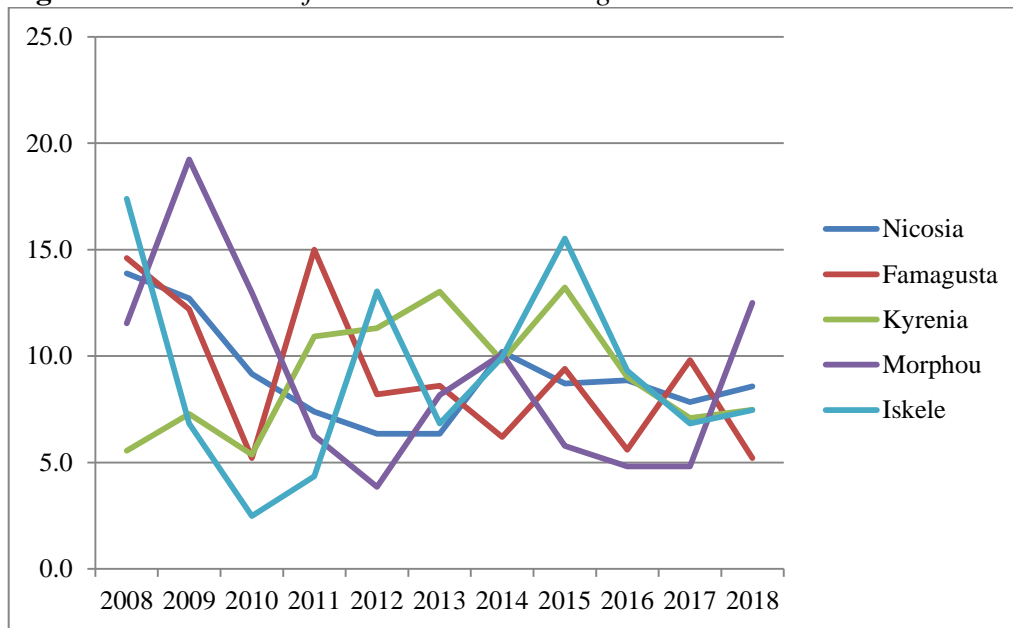


According to Figure 2, the male juvenile delinquents are involved in crime 2008, 2009 and 2015 at the highest level, whereas female juvenile delinquents get involved in crime 2008, 2011 and 2017 at the highest level.

Figure 3. *Distribution of Crime Rates According to Nationality*



According to Figure 3, the highest rate of Turkish Cypriot juvenile delinquents was found in 2008, whilst the highest rate of Turkish juvenile delinquents was found in 2009; the highest rate of juvenile delinquents from other nationalities was seen in 2012.

Figure 4. *Distribution of Crime Rates According to Area*

When Figure 4 is examined, it is observed that juvenile crimes rates were highest in Nicosia 2008, in Famagusta in 2011, Kyrenia in 2015, in Morphou in 2009 and in Iskele in 2008.

Table 3 illustrates Pearson chi-square test results regarding a comparison of crime types and juvenile delinquents' sociodemographic characteristics. This table determines that there is a statistically significant difference between crime types and the sex of juvenile delinquents ($p < 0.05$). Male juvenile delinquents' rate of robbery is higher than their female counterparts, whereas the female juvenile delinquents' rate of physical assault is higher than their male counterparts.

A statistically significant difference is found between the age of juvenile delinquents and crime types ($p < 0.05$). The rate of robbery within juvenile delinquents aged 13 or younger is higher compared to those aged 16-17 years, while the rate of physical assault is low.

We found that there is a statistically significant difference between the nationality of juvenile delinquents and crime types ($p < 0.05$). The rate of robbery of Turkish juvenile delinquents is higher than Turkish Cypriot juvenile delinquents, while the rate of physical assault is low.

There is a statistically significant difference between the residence of juvenile delinquents and crime types ($p < 0.05$). The rate of criminal involvement within juvenile delinquents from Iskele is the lowest. However, the rate of physical assault in Nicosia is lower than Iskele.

It is determined that there is a statistically significant difference between the occupation of juvenile delinquents and crime types ($p < 0.05$). The highest rate of robbery is realised within the unemployed juvenile delinquents, whereas the rate of physical assault within students is higher than unemployed juvenile delinquents.

Table 3. Comparison of Juvenile Delinquents' Sociodemographic Features and Crime Types

	Robbery	Physical Assault	Fraud	Sexual Assault/Rape/ Sex Work	Insult/Intentional Harm	Narcotics/Gambling	X ²	p
Sex								
Female	20.6	50.8	5.8	2.1	12.7	7.9	107.713	0.000*
Male	57.1	24.6	2.1	3.5	9.4	3.4		
Age								
13 years old and under	78.7	13.0	0.5	0.9	6.5	0.5	171.942	0.000*
14 years old	66.2	15.8	2.2	5.7	8.3	1.8		
15 years old	60.3	22.5	4.5	2.8	7.6	2.3		
16 years old	53.0	30.5	1.5	3.5	7.8	3.7		
17 years old	38.8	34.5	3.0	3.4	13.9	6.5		
Nationality								
Turkish	40.1	36.1	3.6	3.6	13.5	3.0	150.276	0.000*
Turkish	66.7	18.4	1.0	3.0	6.7	4.2		
Other	55.7	25.2	3.2	3.6	7.1	5.2		
City								
Nicosia	58.6	19.7	2.6	3.8	10.0	5.3	85.628	0.000*
Famagusta	50.6	32.3	4.3	2.1	7.7	3.0		
Kyrenia	54.2	28.3	0.6	4.0	8.4	4.4		
Morphou	55.8	25.6	3.0	2.5	11.6	1.5		
Iskele	37.2	41.0	0.6	4.5	16.0	0.6		
Southern Cyprus/Abroad	51.0	30.6	4.1	2.0	8.2	4.1		
Occupation								
Unemployed	66.5	15.5	1.2	2.3	9.9	4.6	111.655	0.000*
Employed	53.2	23.3	5.1	4.0	9.8	4.5		
Student	46.3	35.5	2.1	3.6	9.5	3.1		

* $p < 0.05$

Discussion and Conclusions

The present study provides information about the prevalence of juvenile delinquency and sociodemographic characteristics associated with delinquency in Northern Cyprus. As the third largest island in the Mediterranean, Cyprus is divided into north and south. North island nation population that estimated to be about 350 thousand has suffered through war and famine through the period 1963-1974, followed by political and geographical isolation (Volkan and Volkan 2020). The country is isolated from the world therefore, interventions on social problems are very limited.

The findings contribute to understanding the dimensions of juvenile delinquency in the country. In this research, arrest patterns of juveniles vary by sex, age, crime type, nationality and occupation. According to the crime data between 2008 and 2018, delinquency is a substantial problem. Worldwide, criminal behaviour is more common among boys (Vaske et al. 2011, p. 376, Agnew and Brezina 2018, Barak et al. 2018). Not surprisingly, this study also

reveals that boys were more likely to be engaged in criminal behaviour than girls (90.8%). In the general census, the population aged 13-18 was estimated at 20573 (General Census TRNC 2011). There are 10055 female and 10518 male among them. The prevalence of delinquent acts is 18% among males and 2% among females; this equals a male–female risk ratio of 9.0 ($18 \div 2\%$), and a risk difference between males and females of 16% ($18 - 2\%$). This result provided insight into the gender disparity in crime. According to a research comparing 11 European countries, females have a lower delinquency rate than males (Junger-Tas et al. 2004). This can be thought of as a result of the fact that there is more control over girls in society and more effort to protect girls than boys. According to Huebner and Betts (2002), the attachment bond variables of social control theory provide such an overall protective function for females regarding delinquency and academic achievement. Several studies also imply that “males are more likely to possess lower levels of self-control than females” and “females are more likely than males to be subjected to greater levels of parental and social control” over criminality (Zavala et al. 2019, p. 66, Chappel and Johnson 2007, p. 230, Menasco 2017). At this point, the results of present study are coherent with many existing research studies.

Considering the age distribution of the delinquents in this study, the rates of those aged 16-17 comprise more than half of the total sample. The data on the relationship between age and delinquency generally suggests that delinquency is most common in middle and late adolescence (Balkaya and Ceyhan 2007, McGee and Farrington 2010, Brook et al. 2011, Hullova 2015, Roberson and Azaola 2021). One of the explanations of the attraction of young people to violent behaviour in this period is adventurism.

This study found the most common type of crime to be property crime. This result is consistent with global trends. For instance, a study conducted in Cyprus among 2385 students between 12-16-year-old found the prevalence of property crime to be higher than violent crime (Kapardis 2013). This research also identified incidences of assault/physical injury (17.5%), damage to others' property (17%), carrying a knife (8%), selling illegal drugs (5%) and stealing or attempting to steal from a shop without paying (21%). Akbaba's (2011) study in Istanbul revealed that 50.5% of the cases were property crime. Furthermore, a greater portion of all male arrests are for more serious crimes than their female counterparts (Eitle and Turner 2002). Interpreting victimisation data in the USA, property crimes are more common than violent crimes and minor crimes are more common than serious crimes (Truman and Morgan 2015). Although there is no direct information about the socio-economic status of young people in this research, it is determined that the highest rate of robbery is realised within unemployed juvenile delinquents. Many studies have also confirmed that delinquency is higher among those individuals who experience severe economic problems (Agnew et al. 2008, Bartollas and Schmalleger 2018, World Youth Report 2003).

Geographical analysis suggests that countries with more urbanised populations have higher registered crime rates than those countries with strong rural lifestyles (World Youth Report 2003). Even so, Northern Cyprus is not

recognised as an independent republic, and compared to other European countries Cyprus still has low crime rates for both adult and juvenile offenders (Kaparadis 2013). In a research conducted in Slovakia, Hullova (2015) analysed the official police records of juvenile delinquents between the years of 2001-2014 and stated that from 2001 to 2004, there was a sharp increase in the number of all types of crimes among juveniles. In 2004, the highest number of crimes (in total) was recorded by the police (131,244 crimes), and since that time the crimes have been steadily decreasing. On the other hand, the total fourteen-year rate of juvenile crimes seemed to be constant, but in the analysed period of time an enormous decrease has been recorded (more than 50 %). The local minimum was recorded in 2013, i.e., 4,563 criminal cases, and a local maximum was reached in 2001, i.e., 9,806 criminal cases. From this point, rural lifestyles and low population densities can be thought of as protective factors related to delinquency. In addition, social control theorists state that if the bond between individuals and the community is strong, the individual will not turn to criminal acts (Hirschi 1969). Therefore, there are still strong social bonds in Northern Cyprus that are a protective factor for juvenile delinquency.

In this research, when the distribution of crime rates by region is examined, juveniles are involved in offences in areas with larger populations; the offences ratio changes between 32.74% in Nicosia, 25.24% in Kyrenia, 24.18% in Famagusta, 10.6% in Morphou and 7.79% in Iskele. This result supports social disorganisation theory and shows that urban conditions increase crime rates (Siegel 2010a, b). Nicosia, Kyrenia and Famagusta are the three largest cities in Northern Cyprus where social and physical disorder factors are higher. Both social and physical disorder factors such as night clubs, casinos, drug trafficking, high crime rates, a heterogeneous population and so on exist in these cities, as support by many studies investigating the relation between delinquency and social disorganisation (Bellair 2017, Przeszlowski and Crichlow 2018, p. 568, Jones and Pridemore 2019). In consideration of the literature, the results of the present study are consistent with the characteristics of social disorganisation theory.

Annual police statistics pertaining to juveniles involved in offences show a significant decrease between 2008 and 2009 but no consistent trend over the last 9 years: 2010 (147), 2011 (202), 2012 (172), 2013 (182), 2014 (188), 2015 (212), 2016 (160), 2017 (160) and 2018 (161). It can only be said that female delinquency has sharper rises and falls over the years compared to male delinquency.

Another important variable in this study is nationality. It can be seen that foreign youths have lower rates of delinquent acts (14.94%) compared to youths who have Turkish Cypriot nationality (42.55%) and Turkish nationality (42.50%). However, there was no significant difference in the prevalence of delinquency between youths with Turkish Cypriot born parents and youths with foreign-born parents. Similarly, a study conducted in 2006 among 60,900 students in Canada determined that the prevalence of delinquent behaviour reported by foreign youths was lower than it was for their Canadian-born peers (Savoie 2007).

Juvenile delinquency is an important problem in many countries, as in Northern Cyprus. The present study aims to form a profile of juvenile delinquents in Northern Cyprus in order to understand related tendencies. It is crucial to reveal

the sociodemographic features of juvenile delinquents to create social policies to tackle this issue. Besides the penalties given to children involved in a crime, educational and psychosocial support should also be provided. Unfortunately, the official records of juvenile delinquents are limited in Northern Cyprus, so the researchers do not have access to information such as family type, prior victimisation, prior criminality, ex-conviction of parents, addiction, etc. Such information may make this analysis much more effective; however, these limited results are beneficial for Northern Cyprus in order to observe the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency.

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