
**SOCIO- DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE EMERGING ADULT
OFFENDERS IN CENTRAL PRISONS OF TAMIL NADU AND BORSTAL
SCHOOL**

Aruna J *, Dr. S. Karunanidhi**

*Ph. D Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Madras

**Professor and Head, Department of Psychology, Principal Investigator, Research Chair on “Research on Prisons and Rehabilitation of Prisoners” sanctioned by Government of Tamil Nadu, University of Madras, Chepauk, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

Emerging adulthood is described as a stage of developmental period between eighteen to twenty-five years and is characterized as the stage of instability, exploration, self- focused and feeling in between. This stage of development has been identified as a critical period as some of the emerging adults may experience maturity and positive behavioral changes in the course of their development while others may engage in deviant behavior such as substance abuse, committing crime and other risky behaviors. Although substantial researches have been conducted among the adolescents there is no ample researches that has been conducted among the emerging adults in India, especially with reference to the special population like prisoners, it was observed there have been no satisfactory researches that has been conducted among the emerging adult offenders. As a first step, the researcher felt that there is a need to understand the socio – demographic profile of the emerging adult offenders imprisoned in various central prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal school as this will enable the researcher to understand the factors that may influence their offending and antisocial behavior. Descriptive research design was adopted for the present study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 248 emerging adult offenders from various central prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal school at Pudukkottai. The semi structured interview schedule was developed by the researcher to elicit information on socio demographic details such as education, employment, family income, type of family, type of offence etc. The interview schedule also addressed the questions on some of the deviant behavior engaged by the offenders, family criminality, and reason for committing the crime. The information gained from the semi structured interview has provided an insight about some of the causal factors that would have made these young prisoners to involve in criminal behaviors. The study has highlighted the need to further explore and explain the causal factors of the offending

behavior among emerging adult offenders. Results of the semi structured interview and implication of the results has been discussed.

Keywords: Socio-demographic profile and Emerging Adult offenders

INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood is proposed as a new concept of development for the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25 by Arnett in the year 2000. He argued that this period, emerging adulthood, is neither adolescence nor young adulthood but is theoretically and empirically distinct from both the periods where it is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. According to Arnett (2000) "Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews". According to Arnett (2000) "Emerging adulthood is not a universal period of human development, but a period that exists under certain conditions that have occurred only quite recently and only in some cultures". With this perspective, Chopra (2012) conducted a study among Indian college students ages between 18-25 years, from Delhi and Vadodara cities in the northern and western regions of India, to find out whether the phase of emerging adulthood exists in the Indian context and the perspectives of young people regarding adulthood. The findings of the study indicated that the young participants of the study were still exploring their choices with respect to education and career, few of the students felt that they have not attained full adulthood status and feel that they are incapable of taking their own decisions at certain situations, majority of the students were focused on their educational and career goals with an objective of becoming self-reliant, some of the participants felt they are adults as they live independently but on the other hand, majority of them felt that they don't perceive them as adult and reported that they still rely on parental decision and financially dependent on their parents which reflected an ambiguity in their perception. From the above study it is clearly understood that the results of the study reflected on five features of emerging adulthood such as identity explorations, instability, self-focused, feeling in-between and exploration of possibilities as identified by Arnett and the phase of emerging adulthood appears to exist in India. Keeping this view in mind, the Researcher has operationally defined the sample in the present study as "Emerging Adults" as the majority of the sample are young remand prisoners ages between 18 to 21 years imprisoned in various central prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal school at Pudukkottai.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous researches have indicated that this developmental period of emerging adulthood is more likely to engage in risk and reckless behaviors such as, drug use (Arnett, 2005; Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 2003), reckless driving (Jonah, 1990), reckless sexual activities (National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, 2005), and Prone to sexually transmitted diseases (Stein, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1994).

Earlier research studies in the field of criminology and sociology have indicated that demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, disorganized or broken families, inconsistent discipline practice from parents, neighbourhood crime, associating with deviant peers may put an individual at high risk for criminal offending and victimization. Research evidences have consistently indicated that young people, especially males, and members of disadvantaged minorities are at high risk of becoming offenders and victims. Studies have found that youths' involvement with deviant peers is an important mediator of neighbourhood effects on offending. Specifically, community disadvantage and social disorganization are positively related to youths' association with deviant friends (Brody et al., 2001; Ge, Brody, Conger, Simons, & Murry, 2002). Many researchers have argued that associating with delinquent friends, is the strongest risk factor for individual antisocial outcomes. A study was conducted by Henry, Tolan & Gorman-Smith (2001) where they examined the relationship between the family interactions, peer relationships, and antisocial behavior among 246 boys living in inner-city Chicago and found that adolescents who experienced low emotional support and inconsistent discipline from their parents, reported having more deviant behavior and involved with more violent and nonviolent delinquent behavior. Research studies have also shown that poverty, history of family criminality, broken family, maltreatment experienced during childhood, ineffective parental behaviour, and parental substance abuse were found as contributory factors influencing offensive tendencies. (Mistry, Vandewater, Huston & McIyod, 2002, as cited by Abdullah & Abd Rahman)

From the previous research studies, it could be observed that some of the deviant behaviors such as substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, crime and deviance are highly prevalent among the youth population and also some of the demographic characteristics such as age, sex, members of the disadvantaged communities, family and antisocial peer environment have been linked to the criminal offending and behavioral problems. It was observed that in India, there are abundant research studies conducted among the juvenile delinquents and adolescents' behavioural problems and psycho social factors influencing it but very little attention has been given to the emerging adults and there is a dearth of research studies among the special population of this group such as the emerging adult prisoners. Compared with the emerging adults in the general population, the prison population may persistently engage in range of behaviours such as

violence towards others, suicidal attempts, deliberate self-harm, substance abuse, unprotected sexual activity, destruction of public property etc that may result in frequent conflict with law, and also causing injuries to self and others. Keeping this view in mind, the present study has been conducted among the emerging adult offenders between the ages of 18 to 21, imprisoned in various central prisons of Tamil Nadu, where the Researcher visited the eight Central Prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal School at Pudukkottai and made an attempt to conduct a personal interview with the emerging adult offenders using the semi structured interview schedule to know the socio demographic profile of the offenders.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To know the socio – demographic profile of the emerging adult offenders imprisoned in various Central Prisons of Tamil Nadu and the Borstal School at Pudukkottai.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To obtain information on the offender's education and employment status, parents education and employment status, monthly income of the family, type of family, living arrangements, type of offence committed by the offenders, reasons for committing the crime, types of harmful substances abused by these offenders, father's, siblings and peer's usage of illegal substances and alcohol, types of social networking sites accessed and the most frequently accessed social networking site, and previous imprisonment of family members and peers.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was adopted for the present study. The study was carried out in the eight central prisons of Tamil Nadu such as Puzhal CP, Vellore CP, Coimbatore CP, Salem CP, Trichy CP, Madurai CP, Palayamkottai CP, Cuddalore CP and one Borstal school at Pudukkottai. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample from the central prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal school at Pudukkottai. The sample of the study were young remand offenders aged between 18 to 21 years.

Procedure

The Researcher obtained permission from the Additional Director General of Police/Inspector General of Prisons, Tamil Nadu Prison Department to conduct personal interview with the young remand prisoners imprisoned in the eight the central prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal school at Pudukkottai. Based on the date and time allotted by respective superintendent of central prisons and Borstal school, the researcher conducted personal interviews with each emerging adult offender. A total number of 320 young remand prisoners between the age 18 to 21 were

interviewed and data was collected from them. Out of these, 248 were included for the analysis and the rest were rejected due to incomplete information.

Socio- demographic profile of the emerging adult offenders

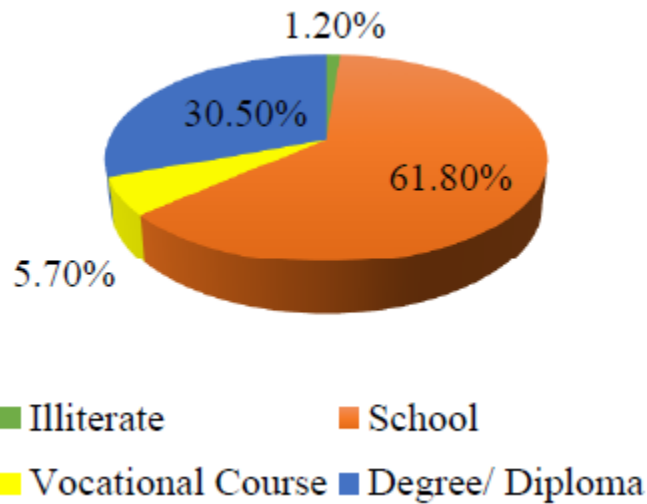


Fig. 1: Education status of the offender

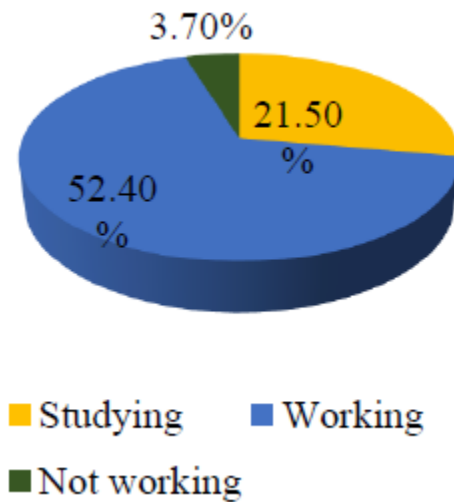


Fig. 2: Employment status of the offender

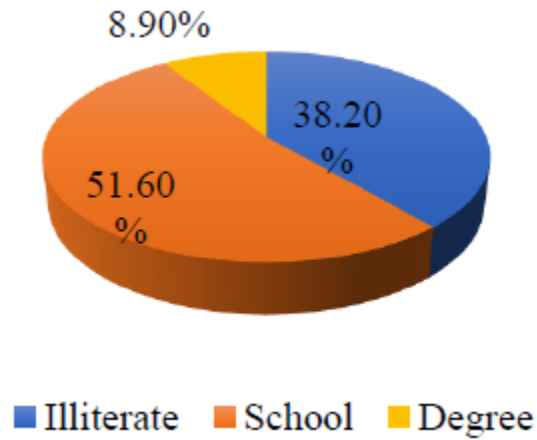


Fig. 3: Father's education status

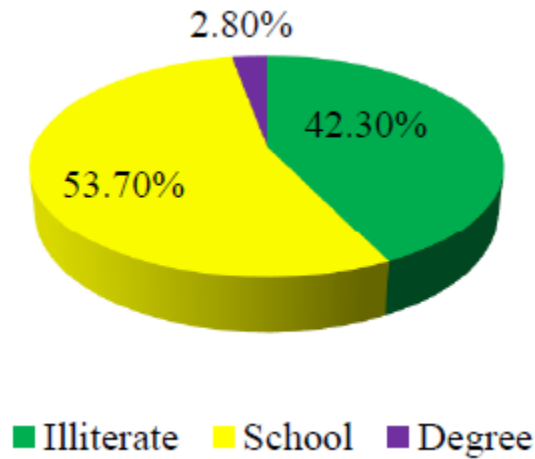
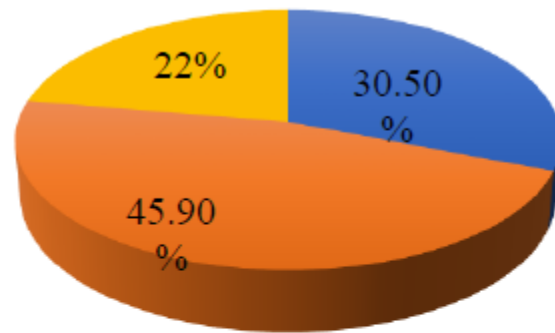
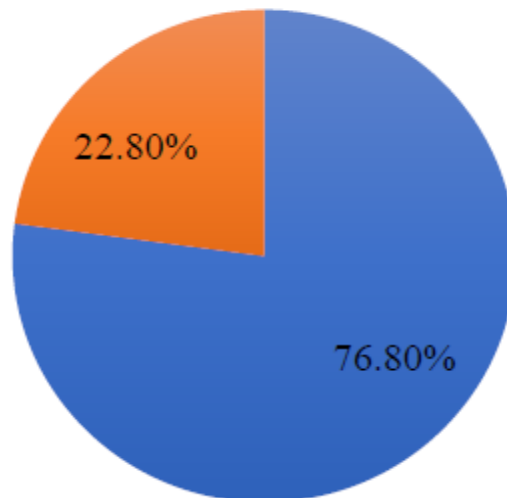


Fig. 4: Mother's education status



■ Less than 5000 ■ 5000 to 10,000
■ Above 10,000

Fig. 5: Monthly income of the family



■ Nuclear ■ Joint

Fig. 6: Type of family

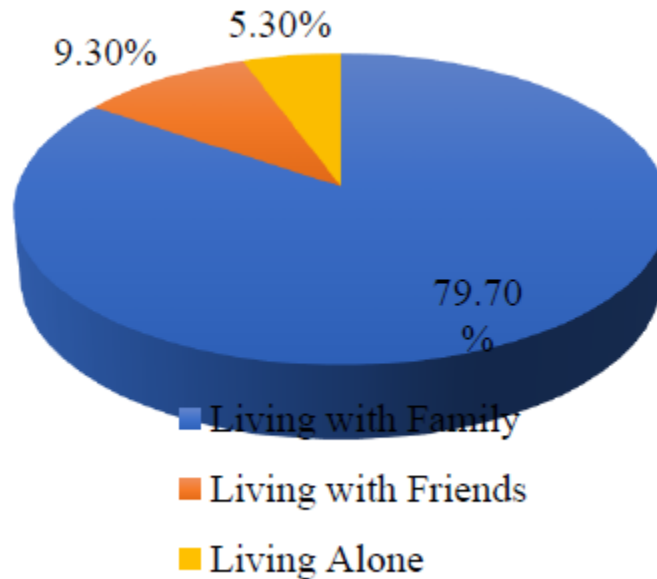


Fig. 7: Living arrangements of the offender

Table 1

Results obtained from the personal interview on the type of offense committed, reasons for committing crime, abusing substances, alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs, fathers, siblings and peer’s usage of alcohol and substances, hours spent in using mobile phones, accessing social networking sites and family and peer imprisonment.

	N	Percentage
Type of offense committed		
Property offenses	149	60%
Non-violent offenses	60	24%
Violent offenses	37	15%
Sexual offenses	2	1%
Reasons for committing crime		

Anger	112	45%
Deviant peers	62	25%
Revenge	25	10%
Earn easy money	37	15%
Drug addiction	12	5%
Offenders usage of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs		
Consume alcohol	74	30%
Smoke cigarettes	27	11%
Abuse drugs	12	5%
Alcohol and smoking	47	19%
Alcohol and drugs	50	20%
Alcohol, smoking and drugs	32	13%
Smoking and drugs	5	2%
Pharmaceutical drugs	139	56%
Father's alcohol habit	193	78%
Siblings usage of illegal substances	119	48%
Peers usage of illegal substances	228	92%
Hours spent in using electronic gadgets		
More than 6 hrs	101	41%

4 to 6 hrs	55	22%
2 to 4 hrs	47	19%
Less than an hour	45	18%
Purpose of using electronic gadgets		
Playing games	203	82%
Accessing Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram	226	91%
Watching pornographic movies	213	86%
Family and friend's imprisonment		
Family members imprisoned	50	20%
Friends imprisoned	112	45%

Major inferences drawn from the personal interview conducted with the Emerging Adult Offenders:

1. Out of 248 emerging adult offenders interviewed, it was found that 60% of the offenders was imprisoned for committing property offenses, 24% of the offenders was imprisoned for committing non – violent offenses, 15% was imprisoned for committing violent offenses, and 1% was imprisoned for committing sexual offenses.
2. While analysing the reasons for committing the crime 45% reported that they were unable to control their anger, 25% associating with gang of adult criminals and deviant peers, 10%

wanting to take revenge for their past injuries, 15% to avail easy money and 5% addicted to drugs.

3. Majority of the emerging adult offenders reported that they consume drugs, drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. Among them, 30% reported that they had drinking habit of alcohol only, 11% reported only smoking habit, 5% reported that they only consume drugs, 19% reported that they drink alcohol and smoke, 20% reported that they drink alcohol and consume drugs, 13% reported that they drink alcohol, smoke and consume drugs, 2% reported that they smoke and consume drugs, 56% reported that they consume some of the pharmaceutical drugs like nitrogen 10 and nitrosun without the prescription of a medical practioner, it was found that the most commonly abused drugs by the emerging adult offenders was cannabis.
4. Further, in the present study it was found that 78% of the offenders reported that their fathers have drinking habit of alcohol, 48% reported that their siblings abuse illegal substances such as cannabis and marijuana, and 92% of the offenders reported that their friends abuse various forms of illegal substances.
5. Out of the 248 emerging adult offenders interviewed, 41% of them reported using mobile phone and laptops for more than 6 hours whereas, 22% used it for 4 to 6 hours, 19% used it for 2 to 4 hours and the remaining 18% used it for less than an hour. Among them, 82% of the offenders reported that they play games in the mobile phones and lap tops, most of the offenders that is 65% of them reported that they play games for more than 6 hours.
6. Majority of the offender's that is 91% of them has agreed that they access social networking sites such as facebook, whats app, instagram and watch you tube videos. Among them 86% of the offender's access pornographic websites and 48% of the offenders reported that they frequently watch pornographic movies for more than 6 hours.
7. 20% of the offenders reported that one of their family members is being imprisoned in the central prisons of Tamil Nadu, where as 45 % reported that their friends are being imprisoned in the various central prisons of Tamil Nadu and Borstal school at Pudukkottai

CONCLUSION

1. Developmental transitions from adolescence to young adulthood will make them to explore their identity and because they are no longer adolescence, they will find themselves in an environment where the monitoring of their behaviours by their family members is limited, and they get an opportunity to engage in a various type of risky behaviours.
2. Disorganized family, alcoholic parents, parental criminality, siblings with deviant behavior, low socio-economic status, less parental supervision, parents' low level of education, aggression, associating with deviant peers could be the major causal factors for offending behavior.

3. Majority of the youth are not aware of the negative consequences of the illegal substances and alcohol they consume and also easy availability of illegal drugs such as cannabis and marijuana in major cities of Tamil Nadu and availability of alcohol at cheaper rates may also facilitate the increased risk behaviour among the young adults. Further, it was also understood that the father's, siblings and peer influence towards substance abuse and alcohol was more among these offenders, as this could have made these young offenders to imitate and model the negative behaviour of their father, siblings and peers.
4. In the present scenario, majority of the youngsters spend most of their time in accessing social networking sites, you tube and other social medias which gives them the easy access to watch some of the unwanted contents like pornographic movies and images. Frequent exposure to such online pornographies may also make them to imitate and experiment the same in their real life in the form of rape, attack or sexual assault.

Implications of the study

The present study has gained the knowledge about the socio demographic profile of the young offenders imprisoned in various central prisons of Tamil Nadu. The major inferences from the study has highlighted the behavioural characteristics of the emerging adult offenders and their family environment. In order to deal with the young offender's behavioural problems, it is suggested that the health professionals, psychologist and counsellors working inside the prisons need to be trained in the professional techniques such as the behavior modification techniques and cognitive behavior therapy in order to help the offenders. Creating positive role models can change the attitude and behavior of the young offenders, as majority of the youth learn through modelling others so the prison department shall make an initiative to invite sportsperson, musicians, artist and famous writers to give an inspiration lecture to these young offenders as this might bring the real attitudinal change at this early age, as this likely to reduce the recidivism in future. However, further research has to be conducted on the psycho- social factors influencing offending behavior among emerging adult offenders with a larger sample in order to generalize the findings.

Acknowledgement

This Research article is a part of the Research Project entitled "A study on Deviant Behavior among Emerging Adult Offenders" funded by the Tamil Nadu Prison Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, India.

REFERENCES

- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469–480.
- Arnett, J. J. (2005). The developmental context of substance use in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 35, 235–253.
- Brody, G.H., Ge, X., Conger, R., Gibbons, F.X., Murry, V.M., Gerrard, M., Simons, R.L. (2001). The influence of neighbourhood disadvantage, collective socialization, and parenting on African American children's affiliation with deviant peers. *Child Development*, 72,1231–1246.
- Chopra (2012). *Am I an Adult? Views of Urban Indian Youth*. (Doctoral Dissertation) Retrieved from <http://14.139.121.106:8080/jspui/bitstream/1/513/1/10%20AM%20I%20AN%20ADULT%20%20VIEWS%20OF%20URBEN%20INDIAN%20YOUTH.pdf>
- Ge, X., Brody, G.H., Conger, R.D., Simons, R.L., Murry, V.M. (2002). Contextual application of pubertal transition effects on deviant peer affiliations and externalizing behavior among African American children. *Developmental Psychology*, 38, 42–54.
- Henry, D.B., Tolan, P.H., Gorman-Smith, D. (2001). Longitudinal family and peer group effects on violence and nonviolent delinquency. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30,172–186
- Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., & Bachman, J. G. (2003). Monitoring the future national results on adolescent drug use: Overview of key findings, 2002. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- Jonah, B. A. (1990). Age differences in risky driving. *Health Education Research*, 5, 139– 149.
- Mistry, R.S., Vandewater, E.A., Huston, A.C., & Mcloyd, V.C (2002) “Economic Well- Being and Children ” s Social Adjustment: The Role of Family Process in an Ethnically Diverse Low-Income Sample,” *Soc. Res. Child Dev*, 73, 3, 935–951, 2002.
- National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research. (2005). *HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections: Australia, 2004* (Report No.21).
- Stein, J. A., Newcomb, M. D., & Bentler, P. M. (1994). Psychosocial correlates and predictors of AIDS risk behaviors, abortion, and drug use amongst community sample of young adult women. *Health Psychology*, 13, 308–318