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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER
PRESSURE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND ON
JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG
MALAYSIAN TEENAGERS**



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SASHWINI M SUBRAMANIAM

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS
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**A FINAL YEAR PROJECT SUBMITTD IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF
PSYCHOLOGY WITH HONOURS**

**FACULTY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS**

2024



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DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

SECTION A: Student's Declaration

I, Sashwini M Subramaniam, Student ID D20201092182
of Faculty of Human Development, hereby declare that the work entitled
The Relationship Between Peer Pressure and Family Background on Juvenile Delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers
is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources
except where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part
been written for me by another person.

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(Signature)

15/6/2024

.....

(Date)

SECTION B: Supervisor's Declaration

I, AROYEWUN TEMITOPE FOLASHADE hereby certifies that the above-
mentioned work was prepared by the above named student, and is submitted to the Faculty of
Human Development as a partial fulfillment for the conferment of Bachelor of Psychology
with Honours, and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's
work.

.....

(Signature and Official Stamp)

15/6/2024

.....

(Date)





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

And the day has finally come. Stepping into my four years undergraduate journey in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris with the happiness that I'm stepping into my dream still is surreal in my mind. It's been an extensive journey that has taught me a lot about resilience and persistence. It is this adventure that has taught me how to overcome adversity. This is the path that assists me in discovering who I am. First and foremost, I appreciate God for providing me with the strength to accomplish my final year assignment, despite the numerous challenges that I faced. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Aroyewun Temitope Folashade (Dr Lazbah), for their consistent assistance and advice in completing this final year project. She is not only an inspiring professor, but also a role model in my life. In addition, I want to thank my friends and classmates for their help and encouragement during this attempt. Their moral support was really enlightening. Last but not least, I'd want to thank my family for their unwavering love, understanding, and encouragement. Their unfailing faith in my talents has been a continual source of encouragement throughout my academic career. To summarise, this initiative would not have been feasible without the help and encouragement of all of these individuals and institutions. Thank you for your contributions, large and little.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER PRESSURE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG MALAYSIAN TEENAGERS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to observe the relationship between peer pressure and family background on juvenile delinquency among Malaysian teenagers. The study adapted correlative research design which is a physical survey that required participants to answer questions through the questionnaire distributed. Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) and Self Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) are used in this study. N=150 (n=150 male, n=0 female) participants from Henry Gurney School, Telok Mas Melaka completed the survey that which measure the relationship of peer pressure and family background on juvenile delinquency. The Pearson correlation between peer pressure and juvenile delinquency showed a positive correlation ($r=.333$, $p<0.01$) which is consistent with the previous studies conducted in this topic. Two types of analysis were run to find the relationship between family background variables and juvenile delinquency, Chi-Square test was used. Unfortunately, the findings for the association/relationship between family background and juvenile delinquency does not show any significant relationship. In summary, the issue of peer pressure and familial background on juvenile delinquency among Malaysian teens is a new field to be investigated in Malaysia, with only a limited number of studies accessible to compare the data. However, there is always opportunity for additional study and results in the future.

Keywords: peer pressure, family background, juvenile delinquency, teenagers

HUBUNGAN ANTARA TEKANAN RAKAN SEBAYA DENGAN LATAR BELAKANG KELUARGA TERHADAP DELINKUENSI JUVANA DALAM KALANGAN REMAJA DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini ialah untuk mennyelidik hubungan antara tekanan rakan sebaya dan latar belakang keluarga mengenai jenayah remaja di kalangan remaja Malaysia. Kajian ini menyesuaikan penyelidikan korelatif yang merupakan kaji selidik fizikal yang memerlukan peserta untuk menjawab soalan-soalan yang lebih serius melalui soal selidik yang diberikan. Skala Peer Pressure (PPS) dan Skala Self Reported Delinquency (SRDS) digunakan dalam kajian ini. N=150 (n=150 lelaki, n=0 wanita) juvana dari Sekolah Henry Gurney, Telok Mas Melaka menyelesaikan kajian yang mengukur hubungan tekanan rakan sebaya dan latar belakang keluarga pada jenayah remaja. Korelasi Pearson antara tekanan rakan sebaya dan jenayah dalam kalangan remaja menunjukkan korelasi positif ($r=.333$, $p<0.01$) yang konsisten dengan kajian terdahulu yang dijalankan dalam topik ini. Analisis yang dijalankan untuk mencari hubungan antara pembolehubah latar belakang keluarga dan jenaya dalam kalangan remaja remaja adalah Chi-Square. Malangnya, hasil dari penyelidikan untuk hubungan antara latar belakang keluarga dan jenayah remaja tidak menunjukkan hubungan yang ketara. Singkatnya, topik tekanan rakan sebaya dan latar belakang keluarga mengenai kesejahteraan remaja di kalangan remaja Malaysia adalah topik baru yang perlu dipelajari di Malaysia dan mempunyai bilangan penyelidikan yang terhad tersedia untuk membandingkan data.

Kata kunci: tekanan rakan sebaya, latar belakang keluarga, jenayah remaja, remaja

CONTENT

	Pages
DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
CONTENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
LIST OF APPENDIXES	xiii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of Study	2
1.3 Problem Statement	4
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Objective of the Study	6
1.6 Significance of The Study	7
1.7 Definition	8

1.7.1	Conceptual Definition of Peer Pressure	9
1.7.2	Operational Definition of Peer Pressure	9
1.7.3	Conceptual Definition of Family Background	10
1.7.4	Operational Definition of Family Background	10
1.7.5	Conceptual Definition of Juvenile Delinquency	11
1.7.6	Operational Definition of Juvenile Delinquency	11
1.8	Theoretical Approach	12
1.8.1	Social Learning Theory	12
1.8.2	Family Systems Theory	13
1.8.3	Differential Opportunity Theory	14
1.9	Research Framework	15
1.10	Hypothesis	15
1.11	Conclusion	16

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	17
2.2	Peer Pressure	18
2.3	Peer Pressure and Juvenile Delinquency	18
2.4	Family Background and Juvenile Delinquency	20
2.5	Peer Pressure and Family Background on Juvenile Delinquency	22
2.6	Conclusion	23

CHAPTER 3 METHOD

3.1	Introduction	25
3.2	Research Design	26
3.3	Population Sample	27
3.4	Instrument and Material	28

3.4.1	Demographic Information	28
3.4.2	Family Background	29
3.4.3	Peer Pressure Scale	29
3.4.4	Self Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS)	30
3.5	Procedures	31
3.6	Data Analysis	31
3.7	Reliability and Validity of Instruments	32
3.7.1	Reliability and Validity of Peer Pressure Scale	32
3.7.2	Reliability and Validity of Self Reported Delinquency Scale(SRDS)	33
3.8	Ethical Consideration	34
3.9	Conclusion	34

CHAPTER 4RESULTS

4.1	Introduction	35
4.2	Descriptive Analysis	36
4.2.1	Demographic Information	36
4.2.2	Mean Score of Peer Pressure Scale	38
4.2.3	Descriptive Analysis of Family Background Variables	39
4.2.4	Mean Score of Self Reported Delinquency Scale-Rochester Youth Development Study	41
4.3	Inferential Analysis	42
4.3.1	Relationship between Peer Pressure and Juvenile Delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers	42
4.3.2	Relationship between Family Background and Juvenile Delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers	43

4.4	Conclusion	46
CHAPTER 5DISCUSSION		47
5.1	Introduction	47
5.2	Discussion	48
5.2.1	Descriptive Analysis on Demographic Variables	48
5.2.2	Descriptive Analysis on Peer Pressure Scale (PPS)	50
5.2.3	Descriptive Analysis on Family Background Variables	50
5.2.4	Descriptive Analysis on Self Reported Delinquency Scale	52
5.2.5	Relationship between Peer Pressure Scale and Juvenile Delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers	52
5.2.6	Relationship between Family Background and Juvenile Delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers	55
5.3	Implication of Study	57
5.4	Limitation of Study	58
5.5	Recommendation for Future Research	59
5.6	Summary of Study	61
5.7	Conclusion	63
REFERENCES		64
APPENDIXES		67

LIST OF TABLES

No. Table	Title	Page
Table 4.1	Demographic Information of Participants	36
Table 4.2	Descriptive Score of Peer Pressure Scale	39
Table 4.3	Descriptive analysis of Family Background Variables	40
Table 4.4	Descriptive Score of Self Reported Delinquency Scale-Rochester Youth Development Study	42
Table 4.5	Pearson Correlation between Peer Pressure and Juvenile Delinquency	44
Table 4.6	Chi-Square Test Table between Family Background Variables and Juvenile Delinquency	45

LIST OF FIGURES

No. Figure	Title	Page
Figure 1.1	Research Framework	15



LIST OF SYMBOLS

H_o	Null Hypothesis
H_1	Alternate Hypothesis
f	Frequency
%	Percent
N	Population samples
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
Df	Degree of freedom



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
PPS	Peer Pressure Scale
SRDS	Self Reported Delinquency Scale



LIST OF APPENDIXES

Appendix A	Informed Consent Form
Appendix B	Demographic Information
Appendix C	Section B: Family Background
Appendix D	Section C: Peer Pressure Scale (PPS)
Appendix E	Section D: Self Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS)
Appendix F	Analysis Output
Appendix G	Plagiarism Report
Appendix H	Supervision Record





CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction



The purpose of this chapter is to provide the background study, providing context and relevance of the topic. The problem statement outlines the issues and concerns related to peer pressure and juvenile delinquency in Malaysia. This is followed by the research questions and the research objectives, detailing the goals of the study. Then followed by the significance of study and conceptual and operational definition. The chapter also includes a theoretical framework, establishing the theories underpinning the research, and a conceptual framework, illustrating the relationship between the key variables. Finally, the hypothesis and conclusion of the chapters will be discussed.





1.2 Background of Study

Young people in Malaysia are prone to juvenile delinquency, mainly due to peer pressure. Peer pressure to adopt specific work behaviors is common among adolescents and can lead to delinquency. Research shows that peer pressure shapes behavior the most during adolescence, when people tend to experience the most social pressure. Adolescents have a tendency to act in any way to gain recognition, often without proper consideration of the impact of their actions (Bikar & Kamaluddin, 2022).

However, the individual's subsequent mental health and criminal problems are associated with peer rejection and bullying. The culture in Malaysia emphasizes group solidarity, which can intensify peer pressure on adolescents (Lim, 2015). Adolescents who interacts and associate with delinquent friends are more likely to commit crimes including stealing, vandalism, and drug usage (Syed, 2020). The pressure to conform to peer norms and behaviours can often lead teenagers to commit acts they might otherwise avoid, highlighting the profound impact of peer dynamics on juvenile behaviour.

Further, peer pressure does not operate on its own but intersects with other factors such as family background. For instance, Vitaro et al. (2021) found that adolescents with weak family bonds and inadequate parental supervision are more vulnerable to negative peer influences. This suggests that the bond shared in peer relationships are often influenced by the family environment, underscoring the coordination of these social factors in shaping juvenile behavior. Consequently,





addressing peer pressure as an advancing factor to juvenile delinquency requires a holistic understanding of the broader social and familial contexts in which these interactions occur.

Families have always been viewed as vital for the child's upbringing and development. The primary responsibility of parents is to raise their children and instill values in them from a young age in order to form their behaviour and way of life as adults (Zakaria.E et al.,2022). A classic study found that children who lack emotional skills often engage in criminal activities. The prevention of delinquency has been linked to involvement from parents and supervision. Strong parent-child interactions and regular parental supervision can dramatically lower the risk of teenage criminal activity, according to research by Hoeve et al. (2019). On the other hand, when parents are not there to provide supervision, kids tend to go to their peers for advice and acceptance, which can have detrimental effects. This emphasises how crucial family factors are in forming teenage behaviour and how effective family interventions may be in lowering the prevalence of delinquency.

Furthermore, it is hard to disregard the socioeconomic dimensions of family life. Stress is widespread in families experiencing financial challenges, and it can have an adverse effects on parenting styles and parent-child interactions (Zhang & Anderson, 2022). Teens who grow up in these types of environments may be more inclined to turn to criminal activities as a method to escape or cope with their terrible familial situations. Adolescent development may not proceed as planned, and the adolescent may engage in delinquent behaviour if the family element is inadequately provided for a variety of reasons, including divorced parents, separated, death and so on, and no





one else steps forward to take over (Ezarina & NorulHuda, 2019). Therefore, a key factor in figuring out the underlying causes of adolescent delinquency is family relationships and socioeconomic situation.

The World Health Organisation (2021) stated that juvenile delinquency is a serious social issue that reflects larger societal issues in addition to being a legal one. These include social service delivery inadequacies, inequality, and limited educational opportunities, all of which might raise the risk of juvenile delinquency. Not only that, “the number of children involved in crime in 2020 had increased by 10.5% to 5342 cases, compared to 2019 (4833 cases)”, reported by Department of Statistics of Malaysia (2021). The numbers are taking a toll raise which is raising concern among all the authorities. A comprehensive strategy that takes into account the intricate interactions between peer pressure, family history, and larger social influences is needed to address adolescent delinquency. Reducing the frequency of delinquency among teens requires preventative and intervention techniques that effectively address these interrelated domains.

1.3 Problem Statement

According to the rising numbers of young people involved in criminal activity, juvenile delinquency is still a major problem in Malaysia. This problem requires a thorough knowledge of its underlying causes since it presents serious difficulties to society as a whole as well as to the afflicted people. Peer pressure is one of the main elements causing adolescent criminality. Teens are frequently persuaded to participate



in behaviours that defy social standards by their peers in their desire for social acceptance and a sense of belonging. Few studies have explicitly examined how peer pressure contributes to juvenile delinquency among Malaysian teens, despite the fact that several have shown how it affects teenage behaviour.

Research on the elements that influenced juvenile offenders' criminal behaviour in Malaysia is seen to be crucial for learning purpose. Future academics and Malaysian authorities may use these elements as a guide to create educational modules that can assist keep teenagers and schoolchildren away from undesirable behaviours and other forms of criminal activity. A comprehensive comprehension of the problems associated with delinquent behaviour will establish a foundation for the execution of preventative strategies and actions aimed at reducing social problems in Malaysia.

The literature currently in publication emphasises the mutual influence of familial history and peer pressure on juvenile criminality; however, few studies and research have been conducted with a particular focus on Malaysian youth. The necessity for localised research that takes into account the distinct cultural, social, and economic settings of Malaysia is highlighted by this gap in the literature. This study seeks to give insights that might inspire effective preventative and intervention efforts suited to the Malaysian context by exploring the course of actions in which peer pressure and family background contribute to criminality among Malaysian children.

Juvenile delinquency must be addressed using a multimodal strategy that includes parental and peer interventions Besides, policies and programmes that



improve parental supervision, foster healthy peer relationships, and boost family cohesiveness are crucial. In addition, community-based programmes that offer assistance and resources to struggling families can be extremely effective in reducing the rate of juvenile delinquency. This study aims to further our understanding of adolescent delinquency and provide guidance for the creation of comprehensive solutions to this urgent problem by concentrating on the combined effects of peer pressure and familial background (Shader, 2020)

1.4 Research Questions

- i) What is the relationship between peer pressure and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers?
- ii) Is there any relationship between family background and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers?

1.5 Objective of the Study

- i) To investigate the relationship between peer pressure and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers.
- ii) To investigate the relationship between family background and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers?





1.6 Significance of The Study

By bridging a gap in the literature about the particular socio-cultural setting of Malaysia, the study findings will add to the corpus of academic knowledge. The majority of research that has already been done has been done in Western settings, hence more localised study is required that considers the particular cultural, social, and economic influences on Malaysian adolescents. By doing this, the study will provided more detailed grasp of the methods in which family history and peer pressure combine to affect adolescent criminality in this particular setting.

The significance of studying the relationship between peer pressure and family background on juvenile delinquency lies in its potential to inform targeted and effective interventions. The study's findings will help policymakers and social workers better understand the family variables that lead to adolescent criminality. The development of interventions and policies targeted at bolstering family structures and helping underprivileged families can be informed by this understanding. For example, programmes that boost parenting skills, foster family cohesion, and offer financial help might be designed to reduce the risks associated with unfavourable family settings.

A more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between peer pressure and family background allows for early identification of at-risk individuals. Early intervention strategies can be implemented to prevent the escalation of delinquent behaviours, reducing the likelihood of long-term involvement in criminal activities. This study will emphasise to parents and guardians the value of being





actively involved in their children's life and the contribution of good parenting techniques to the prevention of delinquency. Parents may better cultivate healthy family dynamics and offer their children the necessary direction and supervision if they understand the essential role that family history plays in moulding teenage behaviour. Research can identify specific demographic groups or communities that may be more susceptible to the combined influence of peer pressure and adverse family backgrounds.

This discovery has significant implications for society at large. The effects of juvenile delinquency on social stability and community safety are extensive. This study can help build more effective preventive and intervention techniques by addressing the underlying reasons of delinquent behaviour, which will ultimately result in a decrease in juvenile crime rates and a safer society.



1.7 Definition

In general, variables can be defined conceptually and operationally. Conceptual definition gives the meaning of a concept. It involves understanding the underlying meaning which is necessary to attain before finding out how it is used or applied. The operational definition describes precisely how a variable is measured (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). There are two independent variables : peer pressure and family background and one dependent variable is juvenile delinquency.





1.7.1 Conceptual Definition of Peer Pressure

Sim & Koh (2003) defined peer pressure in persuading or encouraging another person to engage in certain type of behaviour, and it can be both direct or indirect. It is the pressure or persuasion that individuals feel from their peers to adopt particular actions, choices, or lifestyles in order to fit in, gain acceptance, or avoid rejection within their social group. An individual's decision-making processes, behaviours, and social interactions are just a few of the parts of their life that can be impacted by this influence, which can be beneficial or harmful. Conceptually, peer pressure involves the dynamic interplay of social relationships among peers, where individuals may be influenced to engage in activities or make decisions they might not otherwise choose when acting independently. Peer pressure can manifest in various forms, including direct verbal encouragement, subtle non-verbal cues, or the influence of group norms. According to Vitaro et al. (2021), teenagers are influenced by their peers to take risks and breach rules, which has a crucial role in moulding behaviours, including delinquent behaviour.

1.7.2 Operational Definition of Peer Pressure

The level of peer pressure among adolescents is determined through a self-report questionnaire, the Peer Pressure Scale developed by Kiran (2003). The Peer Pressure Scale contains 34 items. It is a five-point Likert scale with the following ratings: "never" (1 point), "infrequently" (2 points), "sometimes" (3 points), "frequently" (4 points), and "always" (5 points). This scale allows for a minimum score of 34 and a maximum score of 170. The lower scores indicate the low levels of peer pressure



whereas, the higher scores indicate the high levels of peer pressure. The scale assesses various dimensions of peer pressure, including conformity, social influence, and behavioural compliance.

1.7.3 Conceptual Definition of Family Background

The conceptual definition of family background refers to the combination of social, economic, cultural, and structural factors that characterise an individual's family environment (Teachman, 1987). It encompasses a range of elements that shape a person's upbringing and early experiences within the family unit, influencing various aspects of their development, values, and life trajectory. Additionally, family background considers the structure of the family (e.g., nuclear or extended), the presence of single or both parents, and the dynamics of familial relationships, including the level of emotional support, communication patterns, and parenting styles (Hoff et al., 2002). These elements collectively shape an individual's developmental context, influencing their values, attitudes, and behaviours.

1.7.4 Operational Definition of Family Background

By gathering detailed data on multiple elements of the respondent's familial context, this questionnaire operationalizes the concept of family background. Included in this is the parents' marital status (married, divorced, or single), which identify the stability and structure of the family. The questionnaire also asks about family members' participation in criminal records, including the nature of the offence and past drug usage, in an effort to identify potential risk factors linked to delinquent behaviour. It



also looks at any past instances of family members forcing someone to commit a crime, emphasising coercive settings that might have an effect on the respondent's development. When taken as a whole, these elements provide a thorough understanding of the family background, making it possible to analyse how it affects juvenile delinquency (Kim & Cicchetti, 2018).

1.7.5 Conceptual Definition of Juvenile Delinquency

“Juvenile delinquency means behavior by nonadults that violates the formal norms. In a more narrow sense, juvenile delinquency is any behavior by those persons designated as nonadults that would make them subject to the juvenile court”, (Dussich, 1989). This concept covers a broad spectrum of behaviours, from infractions like graffiti and truancy to more serious crimes like theft, violence, and drug-related offences. Numerous factors, such as family history, peer relationships, socioeconomic status, and personal psychological traits, all have an impact on juvenile delinquency (Shader, 2004). In addition to breaking the law, delinquent behaviour frequently deviates from society standards and expectations for young people's behaviour.

1.7.6 Operational Definition of Juvenile Delinquency

The Rochester Youth Development Study employed the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale, a comprehensive tool meant to evaluate several types of delinquent behaviour in teenagers. The scale, which consists of 36 yes/no items, covers a broad spectrum of delinquent behaviours, from more serious crimes like assault and drug-related offences to more minor ones like vandalism and petty theft. Researchers can get



important insights into the incidence and trends of juvenile delinquency across time by using the scale, which measures the diversity and frequency of delinquent behaviours.

1.8 Theoretical Approach

This section explained about the theories used to derive the conceptual framework. In this study, two theories were used which are the Social Learning Theory and Family System Theory. Besides, the theory of Differential Opportunity Theory was also explained in this chapter. The details of the theories will be explained in the following section.

1.8.1 Social Learning Theory

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which dates back to the 1960s, people pick up new behaviours through modelling, reinforcement, and observation. This idea holds that people learn new behaviours via watching others, particularly those who they consider to be significant or reliable role models (Bandura, 1977). Bandura highlighted that imitation and observation of other people's behaviours, or vicarious experiences, are alternative ways that learning happens in addition to direct reinforcement. According to social learning theory, teenagers who are subjected to peer pressure may become delinquent by watching and imitating the conduct of their peers who they find attractive or respectable. People are more inclined to increase or maintain their participation in these behaviours if they get reinforcement or rewards



from their peers, such as social acceptability or praise. Peer pressure may be interpreted as a process by which the social learning theory functions, as teenagers watch and mimic the actions of their peers, motivated by the potential social rewards or penalties that come with such actions (Akers & Jensen, 2020).

1.8.2 Family Systems Theory

According to the Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978), people cannot be understood in a vacuum from their social and familial settings. This idea holds that families are thought of as interrelated systems in which each member impact and get impacted by other family members in the family. Bowen stressed the need of comprehending interaction patterns, family dynamics, and the emotional processes that gradually mould relationships. According to family systems theory, a child's behavioural issues may be influenced by dysfunctional family dynamics, such as poor communication, inconsistent punishment, or parental conflict, when it comes to the relationship between juvenile delinquency and family history. These problems might interfere with children's capacity to learn appropriate coping mechanisms and emotional control, making them more susceptible to peer pressure and engaging in delinquent behaviour (Minuchin, 1985). Family systems theory, in light of this, emphasises the importance of familial context in comprehending and resolving juvenile delinquency by emphasising the interdependence of family interactions and their influence on individual behaviour.





1.8.3 Differential Opportunity Theory

Differential Opportunity theory is a sociological hypothesis that suggests that adolescents and young adults may participate in deviant conduct because they are unable to achieve financial and social success through ways that society deems legitimate (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Cloward and Ohlin distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures. Legitimate opportunities refer to socially approved paths to success, such as education and employment. Illegitimate opportunities involve engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour as a way to achieve success when legitimate means are limited or unavailable. The theory also acknowledges the strain experienced by individuals when they lack access to socially approved means of success (such as education or employment). In response to this strain, individuals may turn to illegitimate opportunities, which are alternative paths to success that involve deviant or criminal activities (John, 2020). Delinquent subcultures may arise in these settings as alternative routes via which people can get prestige and financial gain by engaging in illegal activities like drug trafficking or stealing. These subcultures provide chances for achievement that aren't accessible through traditional routes, which encourages teenagers to resort to criminal activity in order to fulfil their social and financial objectives (Agnew, 1992). Thus, differential opportunity theory provides insights into how societal inequalities and structural barriers contribute to juvenile delinquency by shaping the availability of legitimate and illegitimate opportunities for youth.



1.9 Research Framework

To relate the Social Learning Theory and Family System Theory, it can be inferred that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and family background on juvenile delinquency among Malaysian teenagers respectively.

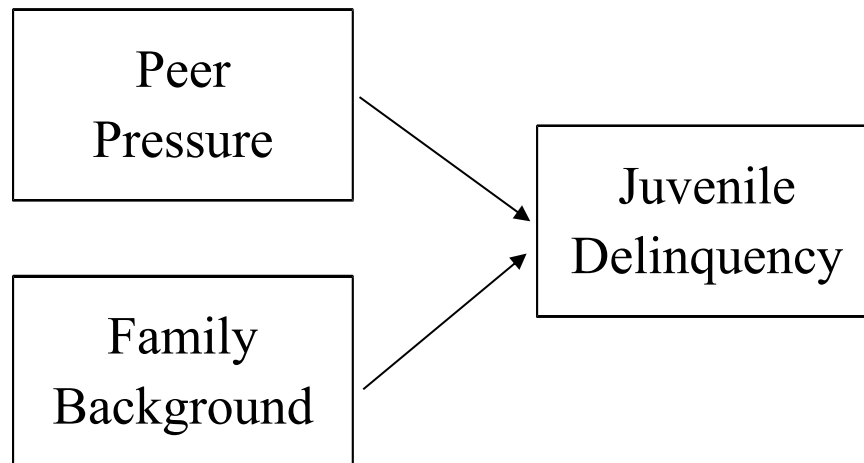


Figure 1.1. Research Framework

1.10 Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between peer pressure and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers.

H₁- There is a significant relationship between family background and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers.

H₀- There is no significant relationship between family background and juvenile delinquency among Malaysian Teenagers.



1.11 Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter provided a general overview of the entire study. Theoretical approach, research framework and the definitions of the variables were stated to explain the topic of the research. The objective of the research, the significance of the study and hypothesis were developed to complete the overall idea of the study. Therefore, this chapter served as a reference for further investigations in the following chapters.

