

A Qualitative Exploration on the Perception of Gangs and Gangsterism in Malaysia

Penerokaan Secara Kualitatif mengenai Persepsi Terhadap Geng dan Gangsterisme di Malaysia

Sharon Wilson^{1*}, Thanaseelen Rajasakran², Santhidran Sinnappan³ & Thinavan Periyayya⁴

^{1,2,3} Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Creative Industries, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, 31900 Kampar, Perak, Malaysia;

⁴ Department of Media, Faculty of Creative Industries, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, 31900 Kampar, Perak, Malaysia;

Article progress

Received: 4 July 2024

Accepted: 23 September 2024

Published: 30 November 2024

*Corresponding author:

Sharon Wilson, Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Creative Industries, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, 31900 Kampar, Perak, Malaysia;
Email: sharon@utar.edu.my

Abstract: This study delves into the nuanced perceptions of gangs and gangsterism in Malaysia through the lens of law enforcement officers, crime reporters, and crime analysts. Using a qualitative approach, the research explores how these stakeholders define gangs, the racial and ethnic characteristics associated with gang membership, the underlying motivations for joining gangs, and the strategies proposed to curb gang activities. Through in-depth interviews and secondary data analysis, the study uncovers the complex interplay of socio-economic factors, such as underdevelopment, marginalization, and economic downturns, which drive individuals towards gang affiliation. Additionally, it highlights psychological and behavioural influences that contribute to gang membership. The research emphasizes the importance of developing comprehensive intervention strategies that not only focus on prevention and rehabilitation but also foster community engagement. These strategies should be tailored to address the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Malaysia, recognizing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of those involved in or affected by gang activities. The findings underscore the necessity for a multi-faceted approach that integrates efforts from various sectors, including law enforcement, social services, and the community, to effectively combat the gang phenomenon in Malaysia. By providing a detailed understanding of the perceptions and proposed solutions from key stakeholders, this study contributes valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on gangsterism and offers practical recommendations for policy and practice.

Keywords: Police, Media, Crime, Gangs, City, Perception;

Abstrak: Kajian ini meneroka persepsi yang terperinci mengenai geng dan gangsterisme di Malaysia melalui perspektif pegawai penguatkuasa undang-undang, wartawan jenayah, dan penganalisis jenayah. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif holistik, penyelidikan ini mengkaji bagaimana pihak berkepentingan ini mentakrifkan geng, ciri-ciri kaum dan etnik yang berkaitan dengan keahlian geng, motivasi asas untuk menyertai geng, dan strategi yang dicadangkan untuk membendung aktiviti geng. Melalui temu bual mendalam dan analisis data sekunder, kajian ini membongkar interaksi kompleks faktor sosio-ekonomi seperti kemunduran, peminggiran, dan kemerosotan ekonomi yang mendorong individu untuk menyertai geng. Selain itu, ia menyoroti pengaruh psikologi dan tingkah laku yang menyumbang kepada keahlian geng. Penyelidikan ini menekankan kepentingan membangunkan strategi campur tangan yang

komprehensif yang bukan sahaja menumpukan kepada pencegahan dan pemulihan tetapi juga memupuk penglibatan komuniti. Strategi-strategi ini harus disesuaikan untuk menangani dinamik sosio-budaya yang unik di Malaysia, mengiktiraf latar belakang dan pengalaman yang berbeza bagi mereka yang terlibat atau terkesan oleh aktiviti geng. Penemuan ini menegaskan keperluan untuk pendekatan pelbagai aspek yang mengintegrasikan usaha dari pelbagai sektor termasuk penguatkuasaan undang-undang, perkhidmatan sosial, dan komuniti untuk memerangi fenomena geng di Malaysia dengan berkesan. Dengan menyediakan pemahaman terperinci mengenai persepsi dan penyelesaian yang dicadangkan daripada pihak berkepentingan utama, kajian ini menyumbang pandangan yang berharga dalam wacana berterusan mengenai gangsterisme dan menawarkan cadangan praktikal untuk dasar dan amalan.

Kata kunci: Polis, Media, Jenayah, Geng, Bandar, Persepsi;

Introduction

The Overview of Gang Concept

Gangsterism has emerged as a widespread phenomenon that has been present in both Western and Eastern societies for centuries. Typically, it refers to a group of three or more people who share a collective identity, using it to instil fear or intimidation in others (Petrus et al., 2019). In London, as early as the 1600s, various organised gangs like the Mims, Hectors, Bugles, and Dead Boys wreaked havoc, committing acts such as breaking windows, assaulting guards, and destroying taverns (Van Deuren et al., 2022). These gangs not only engaged in violent skirmishes with each other but also identified their affiliation by wearing ribbons of different colours (Van Deuren et al., 2022). Conversely, gangsterism in the United States is traced back to the 1920s and is often associated with the myths and stereotypical portrayals surrounding American gangs (Belokurova, 2018).

Gang violence in urban cities is a growing concern worldwide, including in Asian countries. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of gang violence, understanding the underlying causes and dynamics of gangs is crucial for policymakers and law enforcement agencies. This paper explores the Asian perspective on gangs in urban cities and the various factors contributing to their growth. The growth of significant problems in urban city gangs is often associated with poverty, migration, and rapid urbanization, as well as cultural factors such as honour and shame. Gang violence poses a significant threat to public safety, and understanding the underlying causes and dynamics of gangs is essential for policymakers and law enforcement agencies (Spergel, 1995). This paper explores the phenomenon of gangs in urban cities from

an Asian perspective, focusing on the various factors contributing to their growth and the responses of policymakers and law enforcement agencies to gang violence. There are many studies on the perception of gangs and enforcement (Ratcliffe, 2013; Fox & Lane, 2010; Weisheit & Wells, 2001). Understanding stakeholder perspectives on gangs is important, given the power police officers have over criminal cases of offenders and gang members and the influence they sometimes exert over legislation. Police officers typically have considerable discretion over the nature of criminal charges, sanctions, and whether or not to pursue gang-related charges (Jackson, 2004). Although some research has examined the social and demographic characteristics of gang members, gang activity, reasons for joining gangs, and programmes and policies to curb or eliminate gangs, police officers', media and crime analysts' perception of these issues have been largely ignored and their perception on gang members and gang activity is pivotal in addressing gang related issues.

Police statistics have shown that Chinese, who make up 23.2% of Malaysia's population, have 65 gangs, topping the list of races that have the most secret societies, followed by Malays, who make 57.9% who have 20 gangs (Dewi, 2018). Bukit Aman Secret Societies, Gambling and Vice Division (D7) SAC Principal Assistant Director Rohaimi Md Isa told China Press that Malaysia currently has 105 secret societies with 576 branches and 9,042 active members. Indians, who make up just 7% of the population have 18 secret gangs, a total number of 267 branches, and 4,143 active members account for around two million of the population (Durai, 2020).

Although Indians, who make up only 7% of the population, and have only 18 secret societies - their gangs are the most active with the most members (The Sun Daily, 2018). According to Raviechandran &

Tharshini (2023) over the years, gangsterism in Malaysia has grown significantly. According to Datuk Abdul Rahim Mohd Radzi, Chief Secretary of the Malaysian Home Ministry, there are 40,313 gang members across the country, mainly linked to 49 established gangs involved in drug trafficking, extortion, and other criminal activities (Sim, 2015). Of these, 28,926 (71.75%) are Indians, 8,214 (20.38%) are Chinese, 1,923 (4.77%) are Malays, 921 (2.28%) are Sarawakians, and 329 (0.82%) are Sabahans (Sim, 2015).

There has been research on gangs in America (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005) and in Britain Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009), but these studies have been dominated by rhetorical debates such as if gangs in British cities, for example, are an informal association of peers (Aldridge & Medina, 2008; Bennett & Holloway, 2004) or more structured groups that coerce 'reluctant gangsters' into their ranks consistent with other Asian countries (Gómez et al., 2021). Meanwhile, there has been limited research into Malaysian gangs with more depth into secret societies (Ganapathy & Fee, 2002) and gangs in Singapore (Wong et al., 2013; Chu, 2012).

While there has been extensive research on the social and demographic characteristics of gang members and the reasons for joining gangs, the perceptions of police officers, media, and crime analysts on these issues have been largely ignored. This study addresses this gap by focusing on their perspectives, which are pivotal in addressing gang-related issues. Previous studies on gangs have primarily focused on American and British contexts. There has been limited research into Malaysian gangs, particularly regarding secret societies and their activities. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth exploration of gang activities in Malaysia.

The study also highlights the lack of research on the specific ethnic and cultural dynamics of gang activities in Malaysia, especially how these dynamics influence gang formation, operations, and strategies to combat them. This study, explores how these stakeholders define gangs, the racial and ethnic characteristics associated with gang membership, the underlying motivations for joining gangs, and the strategies proposed to curb gang activities.

Literature Review

The Culture of Gang

One of the main reasons for the formation of gangs is poverty and unemployment. Asian cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Manila have high levels of poverty and inequality (Kyriacou, 1999) leading to a rise in gang activities. The lack of job opportunities and economic

instability also make it easier for gangs to recruit vulnerable individuals looking for economic opportunities (Pih, K.K. et al., 2008). Another significant factor contributing to gang formation is migration and urbanization (Freng, 2019). In many Asian countries, rural-urban migration has resulted in a large population living in slums and shantytowns (Brockerhoff, 1994). The lack of social and economic opportunities in these areas makes them a fertile ground for gang activities (Lee, 2022). In addition, rapid urbanisation has also led to the breakdown of traditional social structures, resulting in the loss of community support and the rise of gang culture (Elfverson et al., 2023). According to Marimuthu and Malayalam (2020) discovered that many Indian communities in face significant economic and social disadvantages, which has driven numerous Indian young adults to turn to criminal activities as a means of supporting themselves and their families. In light of the severity of this issue, the current study focused on examining Indian young adults involved in gangsterism.

Decker et al. (1994) mentions that gang violence is initiated to protect "their turf from intrusions", show toughness during initiation ceremony, ritual validation for actual or perceived grievances, and to protect business ownership. In fact, Jankowski (1991: 22-25) mentioned gangs emerge within poor inner-city communities and most of these individuals are defiant. Jankowski also stated seven main reasons for their involvement include competition when there is scarce resources such as unavailability of space in low income housing; mistrust or weariness between members of the community; the need to be self-reliant because of mistrust and isolation and less emotionally attached to others; defiant within their own their private and public sphere hence their confrontation with authority; and perhaps their own scrupulous behavior comes from the natural order of things and the need to survive. Hochhaus and Sousa (1987) mentioned that companionship, excitement, and protection were some reasons for an individual to join a gang. Likewise, Allen (2020) stresses the desperate need for adolescence, to have a sexual, social, and economic identity and to have a sense of belonging. This is reiterated by Gibson (2023) who stated the need for an individual to be a part of a 'new family' or a fraternity or 'brotherhood' and this occurred to younger gang members who were struggling or unhappy with their current conditions.

One of the main causes of gang formation in Asian cities meanwhile is poverty with large segments of the population living in slums (Chin, 1996). In Asia, gang culture is often associated with violence and criminal activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, and human trafficking (Zhang & Chin, 2003: 470). However, it also has a strong social component involving a sense of

belonging, identity, and protection. In Japan, for example, yakuza gangs provide social support and protection to their members in exchange for loyalty and obedience (Herbert, 2021). Gang activity in Asia is also influenced by cultural factors such as honour, shame and saving face. In some societies, gang members are seen as heroes who stood up against injustice and defended the honour of their community. In other societies, however, gang members were seen as social outcasts who brought shame to their families and communities (Kim & Han, 2020).

In the United States, several infamous gangsters rose to prominence during the Prohibition era of the 1920s and 1930s, including figures like Al Capone, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, Machine Gun Kelly, and Ma Barker (Belokurova, 2018; Deuchar et al., 2010). This era evokes the stereotypical image from the gangster film genre: a sharply dressed, charismatic, hyper-masculine Italian immigrant full of contradictions. On one side, he is depicted as a loyal family man and provider, safeguarding his loved ones, while on the other, he is a cold-blooded killer, mercilessly eliminating rivals and extorting “protection” money from small businesses. Simultaneously, he is seen as both a powerful public figure and a dangerous criminal. The imagery of trench coats, Tommy guns, and Ford Model 18 V8 getaway cars immediately comes to mind. Beyond this classic gangster image, the long-term impact of the Prohibition era was marked by the development of highly organised and disciplined crime networks, often called syndicates. Additionally, the enduring portrayal of the gangster originated during this period, as the U.S. underworld battled for control over the illegal alcohol trade (Belokurova, 2018).

Similarly, gangsterism in Malaysia is often glamorized in popular media, which can influence perceptions among youth. The portrayal of gangsters as figures of power and resilience may attract young individuals seeking identity and belonging. This cultural representation complicates the public perception of gangs, as they are sometimes viewed with a mix of fear and fascination (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Moorthy, Inbaraj & Mohammad, 2019).

The Motives of Gangsterism

Generally, the logical model of gang involvement posits that structural disadvantages and a lack of social capital within a community, combined with family dynamics and child-specific risk factors like aggressive and impulsive traits, may result in behavioural issues as early as the preschool years (Raviechandran & Tarshini, 2023; Howell & Egley, 2005). It is proposed that such aggressive and disruptive actions can lead to rejection by

peers who engage in pro-social behaviors, which in turn heightens the probability of early delinquency and poor academic outcomes (Higginson et al., 2015). Moreover, ethnographic and observational studies of gang members in family contexts frequently highlight strained and distant family relationships, along with poor family management practices (Raviechandran & Tarshini, 2023; Walker-Barnes et al., 2001). The theory that family environments play a significant role in gang involvement is supported by research. For instance, a study involving 536 adjudicated Black and White youths found that gang members were more likely to report higher levels of aggressive rebellion against their parents (Friedman et al., 1975), which is still relevant today.

The reasons for joining gangs can differ based on racial typologies as well. Although Asian gangs are difficult to penetrate as they are extremely secretive, most members are clean cut and polite and act with respect toward law enforcement and they (gangs) generally victimize people within their own culture (Ganapathy, 2020; Sheldon, Tracy & Brown 2013: 44). Chinese gangs in the United States (80%) exist based on the symbolism it creates within the community, to seek revenge, for monetary gains or to protect businesses. These Chinese gangs are closely associated with powerful community organizations and invest in legitimate businesses, have national or international networks, are influenced by China’s secret societies, involved in property crimes and control large amounts of money, seek monetary profits and their main goal is to achieve all these is to victimize local businesses (Chin, 1990: 137). Gangsterism among Malaysian Indians has roots dating back to the early 1960s, when many Indians initially joined Chinese gangs. Over the decades, the Indian community has become disproportionately represented in gang activities, with reports indicating that nearly 70% of gang members in Malaysia are ethnic Indians, despite Indians constituting only about 7.3% of the population. This demographic reality has created a perception that associates gangsterism predominantly with the Indian community (Sim, 2015).

In Malaysia members of gangs were mostly jobless or had odd jobs; they were either from poor or broken homes and many had dropped out of school (Malay Mail, 1987). According to Chu et al. (2014), street gangs echo some of the organizational characteristics of the secret societies including hierarchy and the expectations of loyalty although with a low degree of organization. Ratcliffe (2016) suggests that the local Malaysian police and media are rarely consulted with regards to their opinions, hence an ongoing gang phenomena and study is required to enable stakeholders to update information in combatting this crime. In understanding this perspective, it will then become easier to address larger

issues which are related to gangsterism in schools (The Star, 2022), amongst youth, which in turn would aid Malaysian underprivileged and marginalized groups to improve their livelihoods without the need to be involved in crime. Apart from these factors, other key factors promoting gang membership among young adults were peer group influence, poor relationships with parents and financial deprivation (Raviechandran, 2023) this is concurred by Suppiah (2021) and Morgan (2020) who stated that dysfunctional family structures, lack of communication and lack of parental attention and guidance are the primary factors contributing to youth involvement in gangsterism. Focusing on Indian youths in Malaysia,

The Strategy to Combat Gangsterism

Given the complexity and multifaceted nature of gangsterism, it can be alluded that cooperation and alignment between families, schools, social support systems, and law enforcement is critical for developing an effective strategy to address gang-related problems (Raviechandran & Tarshini, 2023). The same authors believe by focusing on early prevention, involving the community, and implementing focused enforcement efforts, we can make progress in diminishing the appeal of gangs and fostering safer, healthier environments for all members of society.

The police hold a significant role in defining and addressing gang issues within a community. They are the main authority responsible for dealing with troublesome and disorderly groups, making them the primary social audience when it comes to officially identifying gang problems (Skogan, 2019). Previous research by McCorkle and Miethe (1998) revealed that the police served as the main source of information about gangs for the local media. Consequently, they played a pivotal role in shaping how gangs are portrayed in the media, which in turn influences public opinion. Media content itself heavily relies on input from law enforcement, and the attitudes of police officers are crucial in understanding how severe the gang problem is perceived at the local level.

Additionally, the media often plays a significant role in defining the nature of gang problems. Police officers actively participate in gang-related programs and establish task forces that influence the formulation of policies concerning gangs (Gramckow & Tompkins, 1999). Notably, police officers' perceptions of gang members directly impact their responses and interactions with them. As highlighted by Decker and Kempf-Leonard (1991), policymakers' perceptions of gangs are even more crucial than the public's, as they define gangs as a social problem through their responses. In essence,

comprehending police officers' perspectives on gangs holds importance in discerning and interpreting the legal measures taken in response to gang-related issues. As gangs have become a significant problem in urban cities across Asia in recent years, this paper examines the phenomenon of gang culture and related practices within the context of poverty, migration, and rapid urbanization in Asian cities.

As part of a significant initiative to combat crime in Malaysia, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) was introduced in 2010. One of the key priorities within this program, overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs, was reducing crime (Malay Mail 2022). The primary aim of this effort was to address critical concerns related to public safety and criminal activities (Ananthan, 2019). Former Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Bador stated that students who already have a propensity to associate with gangster groups go as far as threatening people in exchange for money, stressing that he would not tolerate gangsterism in the country under any circumstance and would detain anyone involved in it – regardless of race, under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) (Malay Mail, 2022).

Subsequently, the Malaysian government has taken various measures to combat gangs in the country. Some of these measures include:

- a. The Anti-Gangsterism Act was introduced in 2013 to combat gang-related activities in Malaysia. This law provides for the establishment of a special task force to investigate and prosecute gang activities.
- b. The Community Empowerment Program aimed at empowering communities to prevent and reduce gang-related activities. The program involves collaboration between police and community leaders to provide support and resources to at-risk youth and families.
- c. The Gang Prevention Program aimed at preventing youth from joining gangs by providing them counselling, mentoring and support to at-risk youth.
- d. The Gang Deterrence Program aimed at deterring gang-related activities by increasing police presence in high-risk areas and conducting regular operations to arrest gang members.
- e. The Malaysian government also conducted various education and awareness programs to inform the public about the dangers of gang activities and encourage them to report suspicious activities to the authorities.

To combat the spread of gangsterism in Malaysia, the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) has consistently

developed and implemented various suppression strategies. Among these efforts are special operations like “Ops Cantas” and “Ops Cantas Khas,” which have been conducted in several states over recent years to curb gang-related activities. Additionally, amendments have been made to the Prevention of Crime Act (POCA) to help lower the crime rate in the country. Furthermore, the RMP’s Criminal Investigation Division (CID) has established dedicated task forces, such as the Special Task Force for Anti-Vice, Gaming, and Gangsterism (STAGG) and the Special Task Force on Organized Crime (STAFOC), to control gang-related activities in Malaysia (Raviechandran & Tharshini, 2023).

Overall, the Malaysian government has taken a comprehensive approach in combating gangs in the country, including the introduction of the Anti-Gangsterism Act, the implementation of community empowerment, prevention and deterrence programs, and the implementation of education and awareness campaigns (www.moha.gov.my).

Methodology

This research aims to explore and understand the perceptions of gangs by law enforcement authorities and the media. A qualitative approach was chosen as it addresses the “how” and “why” of research questions and enables deeper understanding of experiences, phenomena, and context to be collected. The researchers sought permission to conduct interviews with police officers despite initial reluctance from the gang unit officers. Prior to each interview, demographic and personal questions were asked to both police officers and crime reporters. To ensure the exploratory nature of the study, an open-ended and loosely structured interview questions were used. Some of these questions were adapted with the permission from Fox and Lane (2010). The participants, including police officers, crime reporters, and crime analysts, were encouraged to share their experiences with the system in response to the questions. Eight (8) interview questions asked to the participants as listed below:

- 1) What is the gang in comparison to triads and secret society?
- 2) What are the various types of gangs that are prevalent in Malaysia?
- 3) It is believed that gangs exist particularly in urban areas? What is your take on this?
- 4) To what extent are gangs infiltrating schools?

- 5) Do you think gangs have had a great impact on the Malaysian society?
- 6) Do you think there is a great need for research and discussion in this area?
- 7) To what extent is ethnicity relevant in relation to gangs and gangsterism?
- 8) What is some prevalent reasons people join gangs?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a prepared interview protocol consisting of a series of open-ended questions. These interviews were aimed at gathering accounts of experiences from the informants regarding their perception of gangs, reasons for joining gangs, and the types of gangs in Malaysia. The interviews were conducted in English, occasionally switching to Bahasa Malaysia (the national language of Malaysia) for better clarity on certain terms. For police officers, the interviews lasted approximately 40 - 55 minutes and were recorded using handwritten notes as per their request.

On the other hand, interviews with crime reporters were tape-recorded, lasting about 45 minutes, resulting in a total of almost 2 hours of recorded content and 20 pages of text. These interviews were specifically designed to delve into the respondents’ perceptions and emotions rather than focusing on the objective of social conditions such as a person’s social support network, relationships with other people, and a person’s religious or spiritual relations that surrounded their experiences. The main goal of collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the interview material wasn’t to establish “objective facts” about these conditions. Instead, the in-depth interviews aimed to “generate data that provide a genuine understanding of people’s experiences” (Silverman, 1993: 91). From a realist perspective, “authentic” here means that the respondents’ views (as expressed in the interview protocols) are culturally valued as representing “reality” (Miller & Glassner, 1997: 99).

Participants

Data is mainly collected from in-depth qualitative interviews. The qualitative methodology used aims to explore and understand “what things ‘exist’ [rather] than determining how many such things there are” (Hunter et al., 2019). In this context, the focus is not primarily on the number of respondents or cases but rather on examining various dimensions and aspects of the situation being investigated. Qualitative research seeks to delve into the dynamic qualities of the situation, rather than merely analyzing its constituents and proportional

relationships among them (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006: 7).

To ensure a relevant sample, the researchers used a purposive sampling method, carefully selecting participants who represent the specific group of reporters, police officers, and crime analysts required for this study. The criteria for participation were police personnel who were assigned to Gang Unit of the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) and at an authoritative position to make decisions in relation to the dissemination of information to the media (n = 3), while the reporters must have at least five (5) years of experience in crime-beat reporting and were at an editorial position to make decisions about the selection of stories (n = 3). The crime analysts (n = 3) were selected based on a snowball sampling who had previously conducted research and analysis on gangs and gangsterism in Malaysia. The main criteria for selecting respondents were that they should have had extensive experience in investigations in the field of gangsterism. The informants had been anonymized, with their titles and identifiers being referred to in this article, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Codes

No	Title	Years	Identification
1.	Senior Police Officer	32	Police Officer 1(PO1)
2.	Senior Police Officer	20	Police Officer 2(PO2)
3.	Senior Police Officer	30	Police Officer 3(PO3)
4.	Senior Reporter	20	Journalist 1(J1)
5.	Senior Reporter	13	Journalist 2 (J2)
6.	Senior Reporter	18	Journalist 3(J3)
7.	Crime Analyst	25	Assoc. Prof (CA1)
8.	Crime Analyst	7	Assoc. Prof (CA2)
9.	Crime Analyst	15	Assoc. Prof (CA3)

Reliability and Validity

Four criteria should be considered to check for reliability and validity for qualitative research

(Whittemore et al., 2001) namely, 1. Credibility (Are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants’ meaning?), 2. Authenticity (Are different voices heard?), 3. Criticality (Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research?) and 4. Integrity (Are the investigators self-critical?). Interview transcriptions and findings were shared with participants to cross check for the accuracy of interpretation, differences in view discussed and finalised with common understanding for both participants and researchers. In this research participants were interviewed from the major stakeholders in the gang related issues, therefore different perspectives were examined for the accuracy of the data and findings. All aspects of the qualitative research were thoroughly scrutinised with self-critical approach. Thence, reliability and validity ensured in this research project.

Data Analysis

All data gathered through the interviews were transcribed verbatim in English. The transcripts were independently listened and translated into English by the researchers. Any discrepancies found in the narratives were discussed iteratively among the researchers.

Next, the interview transcripts were analyzed using the meaning condensation approach (Kvalve, 1996). This method involves structuring the information for analysis by transcribing the data, identifying essential ideas that arise from the text, and deriving meanings based on both participant descriptions and researcher interpretations. To begin the data analysis, the researchers thoroughly read and re-read the transcribed texts to grasp the conveyed meanings. Salient words, phrases, and sentences were highlighted during this process. Subsequently, the researchers grouped units of expressed meanings into broader categories and condensed the extensive text into concise statements. The core meanings within these categories were then interpreted by the researchers and presented under specific themes. It is essential in such research that interview protocols that it is best analyzed using approaches that don’t rely on predefined categories and numerical counts such as percentages and measurements. Instead, the analysis centers on thematic strands that are extracted from the material through the researchers’ interpretive and conceptual efforts (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006: 6).

Secondary Data

The researchers also relied on secondary data from government statistics and newspaper articles (Bryman, 1989) as the information provided here is useful, and the extent and perspective from which they are reported on is relevant to the researchers’ study. Nevertheless, most

importantly, this information is in the public domain which is accessible to all and need not require special considerations from any government agency.

Results

To explore the definition of gangs, it was a common trait to discover that the term ‘gang’ seems to be interwoven with triads and secret societies. Most often respondents referred to the Malaysian Penal Code which is a law that codifies most criminal offences and procedures in Malaysia as to ensure a proper explanation of this term.

In terms of a particular definition, the journalists (J1, J2 and J3) did not focus on a particular explanation of the term ‘gang’, but was loosely discussed, as there was no one definition which resulted in a mutual understanding of the term ‘gang’.

Nevertheless, CA1 and CA2 as well as PO1, PO2 and PO3 used the definition of ‘gangs’ according to the Malaysian Penal Code (section 391) which describes ‘gang’ as:

“When two or more persons conjointly commit or attempt to commit a robbery, or where the whole number of persons conjointly committing or attempting to commit a robbery, and of persons present and aiding such commission or attempt, amount to two or more, every person so committing, attempting, or aiding, is said to commit “gang-robbery” (under Section 391 of Malaysian Penal Code).

These two explanations outline that the term ‘gang’ refers to a group of persons who are collectively involved in a criminal act. According to CA2, a ‘gang’ is seen as a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and individually or collectively engaged, or have engaged, in criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal behavior involving a group of individuals is a key component of this definition for gangs.

According to PO2 the triads and secret societies were organized in a similar fashion as an organization or a business. Secret societies were registered as a company and had payment dues which members adhered to before becoming a member. Gangs on the other hand were not registered. Neither were they hierarchical in nature. The most common trait was that they had a common interest and constantly created conflicts with the law. J3 agreed with this and stated that gangs differ from secret societies and triads:

“When you talk about these groups, they are highly, very organized, it is like a company, many of them have legally registered businesses. legal money lending all that. Money laundering, they operate wise gambling, illegal money lending and all that. They, you can imagine them as the core company land, they have branches. J2 states that “a gang is a group of members. They main focus is on keeping in drugs and also things also illegal activities, prostitution and even human trafficking”.

In sum, it can be clearly stated that a gang is made up of three or more individuals who have a common trait or characteristic. It has the objective to create chaos and perform illegal activities. That they are all bound by ‘brotherhood’ or an affinity to one another to be accepted and have a sense of belonging.

Race and Ethnicity

To explore the racial and ethnic characteristic of gangs the police officers and journalists concurred with the idea that when it refers to ‘gangs’, there is always a connectivity to race and ethnicity. According to SAC Rohaimi Md Isa, the former Bukit Aman Secret Societies, Gambling, and Vice Division (D7) principal assistant director, there is a racial comparison among secret societies in Malaysia. Chinese gangs tend to fragment and form their own gangs as they become more established. This is the reason why Chinese gangs make up 62% of the total number of secret societies, despite the relatively small Chinese population in Malaysia. On the other hand, Indian gangs have the most loyal members and rarely splinter into separate groups, which explains why Indian gangs have existed for a longer period.

SAC Rohaimi disclosed (The Sun Daily, 2018) that:

“The racial breakdown of secret societies during an interview with China Press. He mentioned that the Chinese, who number slightly over seven million in Malaysia’s population, are associated with 65 secret societies. These 65 secret societies have 167 branches and 3,113 active members. Additionally, Malaysia currently has 105 secret societies with 576 branches and 9,042 active members overall. Further elaborating on the racial comparison, Rohaimi shared that Malays have 20 gangs with 120 branches and 1,513 active members. As for the Indian population, which accounts for about two million people, there are 18 gangs with a total of 267 branches and 4,143 active members. To sum up, the racial comparison reveals that Chinese gangs tend to split and establish their own groups, contributing

to their higher representation among secret societies. In contrast, Indian gangs display greater loyalty and unity, leading to their longstanding presence in the secret society landscape.”

Secret societies strategically target students with the intention of grooming them as future members of their organization. These triad gangs aim to recruit young individuals, placing them in lower positions where they can be easily manipulated and controlled. Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to their influence, making them prime candidates for joining these groups. Once initiated, these youths are coerced into participating in illegal activities such as extortion and engaging in group conflicts on behalf of the gang. Moreover, J2, who agreed with the statements, and added that ‘gangs’ in Malaysia predominantly operate along racial lines and display strong territorial tendencies (New Straits Times, 2017). Territorial gangs are the main perpetrators of urban violence as they monitor potential criminal activities in their territory with an iron fist (Deuchar et al., 2010).

According to J1,

“When we talk about gangs in Malaysia, we are forced to speak about the ethnicity, you see, the Chinese have their own gang culture and the Indians have their own gang culture. They’ve got their own respective culture. And they operate quite differently” ... the gang itself. And the Chinese gangs are very organized. They have their hierarchy, they operate, among themselves...”

This statement is coinciding with Muhammad (2019) who states that the key characteristics of the territorial gang is its good organisation and initiation rituals for gang-member candidates. These rituals separate the gang members from non-members (Raviechandran & Tharshini, 2023).

Meanwhile J2 clearly indicates

“I think they all have their own rules and such but the once the wrote in custom too is, the Chinese community. The Malay gangs, yes, but they are not that influential. The Chinese are a little bit more organize compare to the Indians. The Chinese do not come out as often compared to Malay and Indian gangs... think, they are more focus on commerce like having their own business...”

This clearly dates to the Chinese migration as early settlers to Malaya, as history details, the Chinese triads were formed to ensure their clans were not being threatened and were protected from external forces.

Crime Analyst (CA1) mentioned that in Malaysia, race or ethnicity is not an issue, but society tends to associate this as a stereotype. There are three main ‘gangs’ and these include street gangs, violent gangs, and youth gangs. She explained that street gangs are purposive in nature and focused on destruction and fear. They were based in neighborhoods and created visible nuisance such as vandalism. The second type were violent gangs who focused on creating harm through violent means. This involves a lot of planning. These groups were identifiable through slogans, tattoos, or colors. The third gang were seen as youth gangs. These were groups of individuals that were ‘lower rankers’ who did not seek to harm but create stunts which were driven by emotion.

Meanwhile CA2 stated that in Malaysia, the connection between race/ ethnicity and gang membership had long existed. Early gang members in Malaysia traditionally came from Chinese ethnic immigrant groups originating from China. However, starting in the early 1960’s gang membership has increasingly concentrated among two ethnicities, which were Chinese and Indians. There was also a considerable number of Malay gang members as well.

Poverty, urbanisation, poor policy implementation, ineffective policies from the government, and social isolation were some of the reasons why certain ethnic groups have the highest involvement in gangs and gang-related activities. For example, due to poverty, racial discrimination, and lack of opportunities pushed the youths from the third largest ethnic group in Malaysia – Indians, to engage in gang-related activities in Malaysia. Initially, the Indian community resided in estates or plantations. However, over time, they had forced to migrate from these estates to urban squatters or flats (Anjomani & Ahmad, 1992). The reason behind this shift was primarily the displacement from plantation employment and the conversion of agricultural lands. Living on plantation estates, the Indians were economically disadvantaged group, but they had jobs and adequate living arrangements. However, after moving to urban areas, they had faced further hardships as they lost their meager jobs and continued to live in poverty, often in far worse conditions than previously. This displacement had profound effects on the social fabric, leading to the breakdown of social controls and support systems. Consequently, undesirable social consequences emerged, such as an increase in crime rates and gangsterism (Sidhu, 2005; Durairaja, Geshina Ayu & Mohammad Rahim, 2019).

There are evidences of Indian youth involvement in serious crimes that include murder, arson, gang-clashes, rioting, causing permanent disabilities, and drug trafficking (Sidhu, 2005). These youths’ involvement in

such violent acts had caused high levels of fear within their Indian community and other multi-racial communities. Sidhu (2005) also pointed out that the number of Indian youths arrested for crimes and detained under preventive laws reflected the extent of their criminality within the small Indian community in Malaysia.

The initial motives behind the high involvement of certain ethnic groups in gangs was to help and support their community abandoned by their leaders, politicians, and government. Thus, the gangs helped their gang members whenever they faced difficulties in their life. The gangs also financially supported gang members. The gangs encouraged their members to stay together, help, and protect the gang members without hurting others. Durairaja, Mat Saat and Kamaluddin (2019) asserted that some of the Indian gangs are still having this motive. However, over time the gangs started to be involved in various crimes to gain money and power, leading to severe gang disputes and fights (Lee, 2023; Arias & Barnes, 2017).

Each Indian gang has its own unique identity that may indicate the gang's presence. The ethnicity's culture and customs highly influenced these identities. The gangs have their own logos or emblems, group identification numbers, symbols, initiation ceremonies and oaths, tattoos, hand wedge effects, graffiti, hand signs, and symbols. The emblem used by 'Gang 36' is called Sanskrit "Om" and is closely related to Hinduism or the Indian community. Then, 'Gang 35 or 555' uses the modified symbol of the 'Sanskrit Om' wherein the symbol was modified to show as figure '35'. Apart from that, the initiation ceremonies of 'Gang 36' and 'Gang ABH' were performed secretly at Chinese or Indian temples in front of their respective deities and various paraphernalia (e.g., food items, trinkets) related to their religion and culture are used in the ceremony (Durairaj, 2019).

According to CA3, the relation between ethnicity and gang formation or membership is indirect. It is mainly due to economic reasons, whereby certain ethnic groups are marginalised, experience economic struggles and had opportunities prevented to attain the social goals. This resulted in a group consisting of similar minded individuals who held similar beliefs on certain aspects and supported deviant means (such as using aggression and violence) to achieve their social goals, be it status or financial. If the gang members are of similar ethnicity, usually this was symbolized through the gang's logo signs and tattoos. Ethnicity may partially explain gang involvement at macro-level, but rarely a significant predictor of an individual's involvement in gang as this was more to individualised decision making.

Reasons Of Joining Gangs

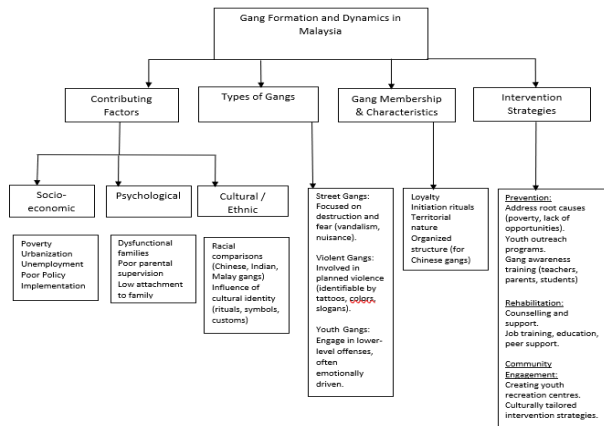
To investigate the reasons for becoming gang members, and based on the study the findings revealed there were four major categories, which included: social, school, criminogenic and psychology. According to CA 2, the social element was crucial as it focused on the family. This related to an individual coming from a dysfunctional family or where there was a transition in the family such as changes in the parent figure or caretaker (i.e., divorce). The individual could also be exposed to gang-related siblings and may demonstrate antisocial behaviour. *"All these elements cause a low attachment in the individual and seeks out support outside the family unit."* CA1 concurred and stated that poor parental supervision such as control or monitoring as well as child management would see a decrease in routine and consistency.

The second reason for joining gangs is the fact that individuals come from a socioeconomic background that disallowed them from improving themselves. This included education and or inability to secure a stable job. The cyclical way these individuals live, coming from financial difficulty and not being able to support or fend for themselves and did not allow for improvements to be made to their lives. This inadvertently also influenced the type of living environments they came from. For instance, CA1 stressed that many individuals in gangs were residents of disadvantaged or disorganised neighbourhood. *"They could perhaps be in a high crime infested neighbourhoods where gang culture is a norm and have grown up feeling unsafe in these neighbourhoods hence they seek out a need to be territorial or to be the 'safeguards' of their neighbourhoods"*. Respondent J1 reiterates by saying that these individuals may not have a choice,

"Because when you're just a form 1 student or during recess in canteen a few of them who are 17 years old, they apparently taller or bigger than you asking to join them. You can still say no, but at the same time, you might be afraid of being bullied or not being welcome by them the rest join them. Moreover, some they see them as an idol, so they join... For Chinese gang, most of them they come from Kampung Baru. For Indians, it can be the environment. If they live in a better place, not so many Indians they tend to be okay based on what I observed. For example, people from Kajang who lives in a flat or apartment, they follow those steps such as broken family, no parental control. Also, it depends on the atmosphere..."

Based on the findings and the literature, figure 1 explains the various themes that arose from the research question terms of the contributing factors towards gang’s involvement, the various types of gangs, gang membership and characteristics and the intervention strategies.

Figure 1. Gang formation and Dynamics in Malaysia



Discussion

Gang violence is a significant problem in urban cities across Asia, including Malaysia. Gangs often engage in criminal activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, and human trafficking, posing a threat to public safety. Policymakers and law enforcement agencies have responded to this issue with a range of measures, from zero-tolerance policies to community-based programs and rehabilitation efforts. However, these approaches have had mixed success. A balanced approach to reducing gang violence is needed, one that combines prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation. This paper has explored and discussed such an approach from an Asian perspective where gangs have been associated not just with a criminalistic element but also embedded with historical and cultural elements which is nearly impossible to eradicate.

A balanced approach to reducing gang violence should include prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation. Prevention measures should focus on addressing the root causes of gang formation, such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities. Governments should invest in social and economic development programs that target disadvantaged areas and provide job training opportunities, education, and counselling services. Prevention measures should also focus on addressing the root causes of gang formation, such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities.

Governments should invest in intervention measures and target at-risk youth and provide them with education, job training, and counselling services as well. These measures will aid young people to develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in life, reducing their susceptibility to gang cultures. For example, in Hong Kong, the Youth Outreach program provides counselling and support services to at-risk youth, helping them to stay in school and find employment (Chui, 2021). Rehabilitation measures should aim to help gang members leave the gang lifestyle and reintegrate into society. These measures can include job training, education, and counselling services, as well as mentoring and peer support. In Japan, for example, the Youth Support Centre provides counselling, job training, and other support services to yakuza gang members who want to leave the gang lifestyle. Alternatively, youth outreach programs could encompass a comprehensive approach to address disruptive behaviour and delinquency. These programs could focus on equipping teachers with effective techniques to manage disruptive students and offer training for parents dealing with challenging youth behaviours. Rather than targeting gang apparel, signs, and symbols, punitive measures can be directed towards delinquent gang behaviours themselves. In a country that prides itself on diversity of culture and religions and the fact that these elements are also used as enablers for the gangs, culture and religion can be a platform for rehabilitation and consonant behaviours.

One crucial aspect of these programs could be to establish dedicated youth recreation centres that not only offer recreational activities but also serve as a hub for connecting young individuals with essential services and resources. To enhance awareness and understanding of gangs' potential dangers, school personnel, parents, and students receive gang awareness training. Additionally, school resource officers should undergo specialized conflict mediation training to foster a more constructive approach to resolving disputes. Implementing these initiatives creates a safer and more supportive environment for its youth while addressing the root causes of disruptive and delinquent behaviours.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offers a critical exploration into the complex perceptions of gangs and gangsterism in Malaysia, drawing from the insights of law enforcement officers, crime reporters, and crime analysts. The findings reveal the deep entanglement of socio-economic, psychological, and cultural factors that drive individuals towards gang affiliation, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach to combat this

pressing issue. By shedding light on the racial and ethnic dynamics of gangs, the research underscores the importance of culturally tailored intervention strategies that go beyond punitive measures to include prevention, rehabilitation, and community engagement. The study's implications are profound, suggesting that effective policy-making must be grounded in a nuanced understanding of the realities faced by those at the front lines of gang-related issues. However, the research also highlights significant gaps, particularly in the need for broader and more inclusive studies that can capture the evolving nature of gang activities over time.

As Malaysia continues to grapple with the challenges posed by gang violence, this study calls for a more integrated, community-focused response that recognizes the diverse socio-cultural fabric of the nation. Only by addressing the root causes of gang formation and fostering a collaborative effort between law enforcement, social services, and the community can the nation hope to curb the tide of gangsterism and build safer, more resilient urban environments. The study provides insights into the perceptions of law enforcement officers, crime reporters, and crime analysts, which are crucial for developing effective policies to combat gang activities. Understanding these stakeholders' views can help shape strategies that are better aligned with the realities on the ground. The research underscores the importance of community-based interventions. It suggests that comprehensive intervention strategies should not only focus on prevention and rehabilitation but also foster community engagement. This highlights the need for policies that integrate community efforts with law enforcement to address gang activities effectively. The study's focus on the racial and ethnic characteristics of gangs in Malaysia has significant implications for how interventions should be tailored. Recognizing the socio-cultural dynamics can lead to more culturally sensitive and effective interventions.

The study relies on a small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. The purposive sampling method, while effective for in-depth qualitative exploration, may not capture the full diversity of perspectives on gangs and gangsterism across different regions of Malaysia. The study primarily focuses on the perceptions of certain stakeholders, which may not fully represent the broader reality of gang activities. The reliance on qualitative data also means that the findings are subject to interpretation and may not provide an objective measure of the issues. The research does not account for the evolution of gang activities over time. A longitudinal approach could provide more insights into how gang dynamics change and how interventions could be adapted accordingly.

Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample to improve the generalizability of the findings. Including perspectives from different regions and communities within Malaysia could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the gang phenomenon. Complementing qualitative findings with quantitative data could enhance the study's robustness. This could involve surveys or statistical analysis of crime data to validate the perceptions gathered from interviews. Conducting longitudinal studies could help in understanding the long-term effectiveness of anti-gang interventions and how gang dynamics evolve over time. This would provide a more dynamic understanding of the issue and inform more adaptable policy measures. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that community programs be tailored to address the specific cultural and socio-economic contexts of different ethnic groups involved in gang activities. This could involve community leaders and local organizations in the development and implementation of these programs

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgement

The author(s) wish to thank Jodi Lane and Kate Fox for allowing us to adapt and adopt the questionnaire for this research and The Malaysian Police for the valuable insight.

References

- Aldridge, J., & Medina, J. (2008). *Youth gangs in an English city* (Final Report to the ESRC). Economic and Social Research Council.
- Arias, E. D., & Barnes, N. (2017). Crime and plural orders in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Current Sociology*, 65(3), 448-465. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116667165>
- Allen, K. A. (2020). *The psychology of belonging*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429056358>
- Ananthan, S. D. (2019). Crime trends and patterns in Malaysia. *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*. <https://kyotoreview.org/trendsetters/crime-trends-and-patterns-in-malaysia/>
- Anjomani, A., & Ahmad, F. B. (1992). Squatter settlement in Kuala Lumpur: Evaluation and

- alternatives. *Ekistics*, 59(354/355), 159–165. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43622244>
- Belokurova, G. (2018). Soviet legacies, organized crime, and economic gangsterism: Russia, 1995–2010. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 51(1), 1-17. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48610496>
- Bennett, T., & Holloway, K. (2004). Gang membership, drugs and crime in the UK. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(3), 305-323. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azh025>
- Brockerhoff, M. (1994). The impact of rural-urban migration on child survival. *Health Transition Review*, 127-149. Cengage Learning.
- Bryman, A. (1989). *Research Methods and Organization Studies* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203359648>
- Chin, K. L. (1996). *Chinatown gangs: Extortion, enterprise, and ethnicity*. Oxford University Press.
- Chinese have the most gangs, Indians have the most members, police (2018, August 17). *The Sun Daily*. <https://thesun.my/archive/chinese-have-most-gangs-indian-gangs-most-members-police-GUarch531875>
- Chu, C. M., Daffern, M., Thomas, S., & Lim, J. Y. (2012). Violence risk and gang affiliation in youth offenders: A recidivism study. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 18(3), 299-315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2010.481626>
- Chui, W.H. & Chan, H.C. (2012). Outreach social workers for at-risk youth: A test of their attitudes towards crime and young offenders in Hong Kong. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(12), 2273-2279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.08.006>
- Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information*, 45(4), 483-499.
- Decker, S. H., Van Winkle, B., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1994). *Exploring the gang member's perspective: An ethnographic study of gangs, gang members and their families*. University of Missouri--St. Louis, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice.
- Decker, S., & Kempf-Leonard, K. (1991). Constructing gangs: The social definition of youth activities. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 5(4), 271-291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088740349100500401>
- Densley, J. (2013). *How gangs work*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137271511>
- Dewi. (2018, March 11). Chinese Have Most Gangs; Indians Have the Most Members: Police. *The Sun*. https://thesun.my/archive/chinese-have-most-gangs-indian-gangs-most-members-police-GUarch531875#google_vignette
- Deuchar, R., & Holligan, C. (2010). Gangs, sectarianism and social capital: A qualitative study of young people in Scotland. *Sociology*, 44(1), 13-30.
- Drugs, guns, and race feed Malaysia gang violence. (2013, November 4). *The Malay Mail*. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2013/11/04/drugs-guns-and-race-feed-malaysia-gang-violence/555721>
- Durai, R. (2020). Malaysian Indian gangsterism remains a bane, yet curbing it altogether is a far cry away. *Varnam*. <https://varnam.my/35740/malaysian-indian-gangsterism-remains-a-bane-yet-curbing-it-together-is-a-far-cry-away/>
- Durairaja, S., Mat Saat, G. A., & Kamaluddin, M. R. (2019). Psychological and criminogenic factors underlying gangsterism among Indians in Malaysia from the perspective of ex-gangsters and police personnel. *Psychological Thought*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.5964/psyc.v12i1.312>
- Elfverson, E., Höglund, K., Sellström, A. M., & Pellerin, C. (2023). Contesting the growing city? Forms of urban growth and consequences for communal violence. *Political Geography*, 100, 102810. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2023.102810>
- Esbensen, F.A. & Weerman, F. (2005). Youth Gangs and Troublesome Youth Groups in the United States and the Netherlands: A Cross-National Comparison. *European Journal of Criminology* 2, 5-37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370805048626>
- Fox, K. A., & Lane, J. (2010). Perceptions of gangs among prosecutors in an emerging gang city. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(4), 595-603. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2010.04.041>
- Freng, A. (2019). Race, Ethnicity, and Street Gang Involvement in an American Context. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology*.
- Friedman, C. J., Mann, F., & Friedman, A. S. (1975). A profile of juvenile street gang members. *Adolescence*, 10, 563-607.
- Ganapathy, N., & Kwen Fee, L. (2002). Policing minority street corner gangs in Singapore: A view from the street. *Policing & Society*, 12(2), 139-152.
- Gangsters on mean streets. (2016, August 1). *The Malay Mail*. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2016/08/01/gangsters-on-mean-streets/1173403>

- Gibson, C. J. (2023). *Fraternal new member processes: An alumni perspective*. Eastern Illinois University.
- Gómez, Á., Martínez, M., Martel, F. A., López-Rodríguez, L., Vázquez, A., Chinchilla, J., & Swann, W. B. (2021). Why people enter and embrace violent groups. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 614657. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.614657>
- Gramckow, H. P., & Tompkins, E. (1999). *Enabling prosecutors to address drug, gang, and youth violence*. Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants (JAIBG) Program Bulletin.
- Hallsworth, S., & Silverstone, D. (2009). 'That's life innit': A British perspective on guns, crime and social order. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, *9*(3), 359-377.
- Herbert, W. (2021). From brawler to boss: Old school yakuza careers and modern times. *The Yakuza in Popular Media: Honorable Criminals or Violent Gangsters?* 21.
- Higginson, A., Benier, K., Shenderovich, Y., Bedford, L., Mazerolle, L., Murry, J. (2015). Preventive interventions to reduce youth involvement in gangs and gang crime in low-and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *11*(1), 1-176. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2015.18>
- Hochhaus, C., & Sousa, F. (1987). Why children belong to gangs: A comparison of expectations and reality. *The High School Journal*, *71*(2), 74-77.
- Howell, J. C., & Egley, A. (2005). Moving risk factors into developmental theories of gang membership. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, *3*(4), 334-354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204005278679>
- Hunter, D., McCallum, J. and Howes, D. (2019). Defining Exploratory-Descriptive Qualitative (EDQ) research and considering its application to healthcare. *Journal of Nursing and Health Care*, *4*(1), 1-7. <http://dl6.globalstf.org/index.php/jnhc/article/view/1975>
- Jackson, A. (204). Prosecuting Gang Cases. What local Prosecutors need to Know. American Prosecutors Institute. <https://www.ndaa.apri.org>.
- Jankowski, M. S. (1991). *Island in the street: Gangs and American urban society*. University of California Press.
- Karmakar, S., Saha, A., & Bbharati, V. (2016). Socio-spatial explanation of crime: A study on Kolkata metropolitan area. *Transactions*, *38*(2), 191.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interview Views: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Lee Lam Thye. (2017, May 3). Sekolah, polis perlu bekerjasama atasi gangsterisme. *Berita Harian*. <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2017/05/27/8575/sekolah-polis-perlu-bekerjasama-atasi-gangsterisme>
- Marimuthu, S., Malayalam, N. & Sukadari, (2020). Family Socio-Economic Status As An Impulse Factor of Gangsterism Among Indian Moral Education Student In Secondary School. *Muallim Journal of Social Science and Humanities*. 60-78. 10.33306/mjssh/97.
- McCorkle, R. C., & Miethe, T. D. (1998). The political and organizational response to gangs: An examination of a "moral panic" in Nevada. *Justice Quarterly*, *15*(1), 41-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418829800093561>
- Miller, J. and Glassner, B. (1997), "The 'inside' and the 'outside': finding realities in interviews", in Silverman, D. (Ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, Sage, 99-112.
- Moorthy, N.T., Inbaraj, A., & Rahim, M. (2019). Exploring the Profile of Gangsterism in Malaysia from the Perspective of Experts. *Journal Forensic Crime*, *3*, 101. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:199526155>
- Morgan, J., & Suhaili, S. (2020). Gangsterism among Indian youth in Penang. *Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *9*(2), 259-268.
- Muhammad, M. (2019). Media violence contents and its effect on the audience. *Forum Komunikasi*, *14*(2), 40-63. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/48458/1/48458.pdf>
- Nataraja Moorthy, T., Aaron Inbaraj, D., & Mohammad Rahim, K. (2019). Exploring the profile of gangsterism in Malaysia from the perspective of experts. *J Forensic Crime Stu*, *3*, 101.
- Over 40,000 members in 49 gangs involved in firearms, murder, drugs and extortion, says Home Ministry. (2013, August 29). *The Star*. <http://thestar.com.my/news/nation/2013/08/29/40000-members-in-gangs-say-home-ministry/>
- Paternoster, R., & Mazerolle, P. (1994). General strain theory and delinquency: A replication and extension. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *31*(3), 235-263.

- Petrus, T., & Uwah, C. (2019). Theatre of the street: Drama and performance as a potential gang intervention strategy and social development resource in affected communities in South Africa. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 34(2), 89-111.
- Pih, K.K., DE LA Rosa M., Rugh, D. & Mao, K.(2008). Different Strokes for Different Gangs? An Analysis of Capital Among Latino and Asian Gang Members. *Sociol Perspect.* 1, 51(3), 473-494. doi: 10.1525/sop.2008.51.3.473. PMID: 19578563; PMCID: PMC2705161
- Ratcliffe, J. H. (2016). Central American police perception of street gang characteristics. *Policing and Society*, 26(3), 291-311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2014.942847>
- Raviechandran, S., & Tharshini, N. K. (2023). Gang Membership among Malaysian Indian Young Adults. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(7), 1325 – 1344. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i7/17428>
- Rebecca Rajaendram. (2022, December 11). Education ministry sets sights on tackling racism, extremism, gangsterism in schools. *The Star*.
- Royal Malaysia Police. (2013, August 30). *Logo kumpulan kongsi gelap didedah* [Press release]. https://www.facebook.com/pdrmsiaofficial?locale=ms_MY
- Shankar Durairaja, Geshina Ayu Mat Saat, & Mohammad Rahim Kamaluddin. (2019). *Exploring demography and sociological factors underlying decisions to join gangs among Indians*. *AKADEMIKA*, 89 (1), 33-43.
- Shelden, R. G., Tracy, S. K., & Brown, W. B. (2013). *Youth gangs in American society*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sidhu, A. S. (2005). *The rise of crime in Malaysia: An academic and statistical analysis*. *Journal of the Kuala Lumpur Royal Malaysia Police College*, 1(4), 1-28.
- Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: Strategies for analysing talk, text and interaction*. Sage.
- Sim, J. (2015). Dei, why are so many Malaysian gang members Indian? *Cili Sos.My*. <https://cilisos.my/dei-why-are-so-many-malaysian-gang-members-indian/>
- Skogan, W.G. (2019). The Future of CCTV. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 18(1),161-166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12422>
- Spergel, I. A. (1995). *The youth gang problem: A community approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Suppiah, V. S., Muthusamy, P., & Ismail, I. A. (2021). Family structure of the Malaysian Indian youth involved in gangsterism. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(11), 221-230.
- Tharshini, N. K., & Ibrahim, F. (2022). Risk factors contributing to recidivism: A literature review. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia*, 36(2), 32-40. <https://spaj.ukm.my/ppppm/jpm/issue/view/46>
- Van Deuren, S., Blokland, A., & Kleemans, E. (2022). Examining membership of Dutch outlaw motorcycle gangs and its association with individual criminal careers. *Deviant Behavior*, 43(7), 880-895. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2021.1919498>
- Walker-Barnes, C. J., & Mason, C. A. (2001). Ethnic differences in the edict of parenting on gang involvement and gang delinquency: A longitudinal, hierarchical linear modelling perspective. *Society for Research in Child Development*, 72(6), 1814–1831. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3654380>
- Weerman, F. M., & Esbensen, F. A. (2005). A cross-national comparison of youth gangs: The United States and the Netherlands. In S. H. Decker & F. M. Weerman (Eds.), *European street gangs and troublesome youth groups* (pp. 219–255). AltaMira Press.
- Wells, L. E., & Weisheit, R. A. (2001). Gang problems in nonmetropolitan areas: A longitudinal assessment. *Justice Quarterly*, 18(4), 791-823. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820100095081>
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., & Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11, 522–537. doi:10.1177/104973201129119299
- Without Sosma Malaysia would be at the mercy of criminals and terrorists, says home minister. (2022, March 23). *The Malay Mail*. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/03/23/without-sosma-malaysia-would-be-at-mercy-of-criminals-and-terrorists-says-h/2049083>
- Wong, I. W. J., Toh, D. P., Hung, P. P. L., & Ang, R. P. (2013). Delinquency in gangs—Selection or socialization? *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 18(6),784-791. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2013.09.001>
- Zhang, S., & Chin, K. L. (2003). The declining significance of triad societies in transnational illegal activities: A structural deficiency perspective. *British Journal of Criminology*, 43(3), 469-488. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/43.3.469>