

Crime and Mental Health Issues among the Young Bhutanese People



CRIME AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG THE YOUNG BHUTANESE PEOPLE

Lham Dorji, Sonam Gyeltshen, Thomas Minten,
Pema Namgay, Tashi Dorjee, Cheda Jamtsho
and Tenzin Wangchuk

National Statistics Bureau
Thimphu

2015

MONOGRAPH SERIES NO. 8

Crime and Mental Health Issues among Young Bhutanese People

Lham Dorji, Sonam Gyeltshen, Cheda Jamtsho, Thomas Minten,
Tashi Dorjee, Pema Namgay and Tenzin Wangchuk

**National Statistics Bureau
2015**

© National Statistics Bureau, 2015

ISBN: 978-99936-718-0-0

Publication: Monograph series 8.

All rights reserved.

United Nations Population Fund, Thimphu Bhutan financed the study and the printing.

This publication is available in hard copy or PDF format from the National Statistics Bureau website at www.nsb.gov.bt.

Publications Inquiries:

National Statistics Bureau Thimphu Bhutan

Post box: 338

Tel: 975 (02)333296

Fax: 975 (02)323069

Please post critical opinion/views directly to lhamdorji@gmail.com

ABOUT THE MONOGRAPH

This monograph presents the findings from the analyses of the police crime data, National Health Survey data (NHS, 2012), mental health records (OPD) of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH), and qualitative data collected using the face-to-face interviews of 44 inmates of Changang Jail and Youth Development and Rehabilitation centre (YDRC).

UNFPA, Bhutan provided the funding for the study. The monograph is a part of the thematic studies of the Socio-Economic Analysis and Research Division (SEARD), NSB. SEARD regularly conducts studies on the issues of policy importance and in areas where the research gap exist. The monographs covering various socioeconomic themes can be obtained from the National Statistics Bureau (NSB), Thimphu. The electronic versions are available at www.nsb.gov.bt under Research Reports. The summary of each monograph is published as the NSB *Research Digest*.

DISCLAIMER

UNFPA and NSB hope the study will be of value to the policy-makers, politicians, development partners, researchers, private sector, communities, and any other interested individuals.

The views expressed in the present publication are those of the authors and do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the National Statistics Bureau (NSB) representing the Royal Government of Bhutan and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Both NSB and UNFPA take no responsibility for the accuracy or omission of facts, statements, opinions, recommendations, or any other errors in this publication.

Table of Contents

Director General’s Foreword	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: The analysis of reported crime among young people in Bhutan	13
Chapter III: The analysis of interviews with young offenders in the police custody	44
Chapter IV: An assessment of mental disorders among young people using hospital records	110
Chapter V: Descriptive analysis of mental health conditions among young Bhutanese people using NHS data	124
Chapter VI: Local leaders’ views on issues faced by young Bhutanese people	148

DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD

NSB's Socio-Economic Analysis and Research Division (SEARD) conducts regular thematic studies of relevance to the country. The monograph titled 'Crime and Mental Health Issues among Young Bhutanese People' is the result of effort that our small research team has made to study and understand the various social and economic issues in the country related to the young populace. This is the second series of the thematic monographs covering the emerging challenges of our young people. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Bhutan Office funded the study and its publication.

Young people in Bhutan are now exposed to many risks and vulnerabilities, those that may baulk their smooth transition to adulthood. Some of them gets trapped into various problems: crime, substance abuse, alcoholism, and mental disorders. Concerns are raised about the need to prevent young people from becoming unproductive citizens, and the worst: as criminals, substance abusers and alcoholics. There is so much to understand young people's challenges, risks factors, problem trends, nature and extent of the problems, their dreams and aspirations, and possible solutions. For this, we need more researches, which at the moment is much wanting. This thematic research has been conducted to address such research gap, more so, to serve as the basis for more such studies.

By reorganising and analysing the police crime records and the OPD mental health records of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH), our researchers have tried to shed some light on the nature and extent of crime and mental health issues among young Bhutanese people. The administrative data allowed only explorative analysis. The correlational, associative, and causality analyses could not be carried out. The qualitative study was conducted with young prisoners as the research subjects to supplement the analysis of the police crime records. Our research team had listen to a sampled young prisoners mainly to find out the reasons for their crimes, their sense of justice, dreams and aspirations, and their opinions about what ought to be done to prevent and reduce juvenile and youth crime in the country. They also had interviewed a couple of local leaders to understand from the local perspective the many issues facing our young people in the local communities.

Second issue that the study covered was the mental health problems of our young people. The research team, with the support from the Psychiatric Department, JDWNRH, has created the outpatient mental health dataset. The analysis of the dataset constituted exploring the nature of mental disorders common among our young people (who have sought mental health services), their prevalence across sex and age groups, and the yearly trends. The dataset, unfortunately, has not allowed the assessment of associative and casual factors of different mental disorders. Further, they have used the National Health Survey (NHS, 2012) data to explore the mental disorders among young people to supplement the analysis of the clinical records.

I believe this monograph would serve as an eye-opener to various challenges of our young people. It is expected to provide some understanding to the problems of growing crime and mental disorders among our young people. We know these problems exist, and we can to a certain extent, make out what causes them, but we lack researches to provide evidence in black and white.

The criminality and mental health problems among young people seem to be caused by multiple factors, which shows us that devising strategies and solutions will involve much complex and integrated approaches. The findings of this thematic study raises many questions that can be answered by doing more researches. Despite many limitations, mainly caused by data constraints, we hope this study may be useful to inform the policymakers, social workers and others.

I acknowledge the effort the NSB's researchers have made, led by Lham Dorji, to produce this document. I sincerely appreciate UNFPA's financial support, which has not only resulted in this monograph, but helped our research officers gain more experiences.

Kuenga Tshering

Director General

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We could not have achieved this study without the financial support from UNFPA. We thank Mr. Yeshi Dorji and UNFPA team, Bhutan office. We were motivated when they communicated to us that other than achieving the study results, they also aim at improving our capacity to conduct independent researches by providing us the opportunity to conduct research.

The study could not have been possible without the access to the crime record of the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) and Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Referral Hospital (JDWNRH). We wish to thank the Chief of Police and RBP as whole and the JDWNRH's Medical Director, Superintendent and Psychiatrist Doctor Damber Kumar Nirola.

We thank the Officer-in-Commands (OCs) of Chamgang Central Jail and Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre (YDRC), Tsimasham. Without their support, we could not have been able to interview 44 young inmates. We thank young inmates who were highly responsive to our interview questions. We also thank our local leaders (Tshogpas and Mangiaps) who shared with us their views on youth issues prevalent in their local communities.

We thank Professor John Matta of Western University, Oregon, USA for reviewing the analysis of the OPD data of the Psychiatric Department, JDWNRH to understand mental disorders among young people.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to Yeshi Wangchuk and Chimi Tshering (research interns) for their assistance in conducting field works and transcribing interview data . They really worked hard to help us collect data (especially conducting interviews). We wish them great successes wherever they are now.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

Young people in Bhutan (below age 24 years) constituted about 50% of the total population in 2014 (NSB, SYB, 2014). The younger generation are better educated than their older folks (youth literacy rate was 86.1% compared to general literacy rate of 63%, NSB, 2012) . The recent socio-economic growth and development in the country has made life relatively easier for its citizens, especially for young people. They get free education and other life opportunities. The Government, NGOs, and the society are committed to nurturing and harnessing their potentials, but some of them seem to be getting trapped in a wide array of problems. What are those issues that are affecting some individuals and groups of our young populace? The crime, substance abuse, and mental disorders related to young population, among others, are few inter-related issues that are emerging as the policy concerns.

Many of us believe that there is an upsurge in crime, substance abuse, and mental health issues among young people in the country. These are the issues that needs to be addressed when docile. Some foreign newspapers have started characterising Bhutan as no more a Shangri-La.¹ Crimes among young people that are [almost] comparable to the urban crimes in the developed countries, are becoming notable. We often hear about murder, gang fight, rape, robbery, vandalism, and drug offence in which young people are involved.

Young people engaging in antisocial and criminal activities is not only morally wrong, but can cause social disorder, affect collective good of the society, and disrupt the country's progress towards the GNH goals; more so, because young people are supposed to devote their time and energy in building their own futures. Substance abuse among younger generation is emerging as another worrisome social issue. Illicit drugs abuse problem in the country may be lesser than in other countries, but it is still growing. The arrests associated with drugs abuse remains one of the highest cases. Mental disorders among young people are noticeable, and it is only likely that more such cases will be observed. We are witnessing an increasing

¹'Bhutan: Fast Forward into Trouble', www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2003/june/14/weekend7.weekend2

number of young people committing suicide. The Government is already concerned about this growing trend.

Bhutan's population is young, and this presents us the opportunity to exploit their potentials and gain from the young demographic structure. This will require the entire society to safeguard them from new social and economic vagaries. To do so, we need to understand the nature, extent, trend, and all possible causes of their problems. This study is an effort towards that. However, since the research reported here focusses on the datasets limited to certain agencies and information collected from a group of population (young convicts), the findings should be considered only as suggestive of general trend rather than implying to the entire young populace in the country. More issue-specific and action researches are desirable and indispensable to come up with practical recommendations.

The report consists of the descriptive analyses of crime and mental disorders data, sourced from the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) and Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH) respectively. The focus was young Bhutanese people. A complementary qualitative research with forty-four young convicts and simple descriptive analysis of interviews with twenty local leaders are included. We have additionally conducted the analysis on mental conditions such as feeling lonely and worried, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and consumption of alcohol and drugs abuse using the NHS 2012 is included. The use of 'multiple approach' manifests our attempt to draw insights from a more diverse repertoire of methodologies. The overall aim of this study is to obtain better understanding of the 'nature, extent, and trend of crime and mental disorders', including suicide that affects young Bhutanese people. Such information are expected to be of interest to policymakers, social practitioners, researchers, and other parties dealing with the issues affecting the younger Bhutanese generation.

The administrative data could suggest only the many facets of the problems. Though the quantitative approach is usually used to confirm hypothesis and determine relationships between the various factors, the available administrative data could not be used to determine associational and causal relationships. The qualitative study was, for this very reason, undertaken to get deeper understanding of why young people commit

crime. It was more of drawing from young offenders' own perspectives and experiences on what led them to deviant behaviour.

The qualitative approach is a useful tool to get depth of views from the study population (young convicts). Through the detailed narratives, intended to be published as a separate volume later, we may be able to present the real-life stories of young offenders, who were serving their prison terms, and others, under restorative and rehabilitation care. The narratives will present culturally specific and contextually rich information about their life experiences, opinions, behaviour, challenges, dreams and aspirations.

Not many past studies in the areas of crime, substance abuse and mental disorders [are known to] exist in the country. A brief overview of the literature review shows that a few earlier studies were either desktop research or somewhat limited in the analytical rigour. One that pertains to the youth crime was that of Lham Dorji (2005), who is one of the present authors. The study is titled "Juvenile Delinquency as Emerging Youth Problem in Bhutan" in *Youth in Bhutan Education, Employment, Development*, Thimphu, Centre for Bhutan Studies. It is rather inchoate investigation of the RBP's crime records. The available data has set certain limit on the study; it does not explore the possible factors of youth crime. Dorji's second work (2005) titled 'Voice of Bhutanese Youth: Through their Dreams, Experiences, Struggles and Achievements' provides rich accounts of many youth issues, but its reporting is more of narrative in style without much analysis.

David J. Powell's paper (2007) on youth in Bhutan provides some background knowledge of drug and alcohol abuse, but it does not delve into the determinants. The paper acknowledges that drug abuse and the associated crimes are 'being seen as a minor problem in absence of a systematic assessment of the nature and extent of the situation making it difficult to get the complete picture of the issues'.

Wangdi, Kelzang, Tshering, and Jigme have conducted a study on youth violence using a 'moderated questionnaire survey' with 516 students of five lower secondary schools in Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag. They conclude (1) the presence of higher level of youth violence, and (2) the presence of higher level of situational and psychological violence among the

sampled students comparing to a predatory violence. They suggest the need to prevent and treat youth violence very urgently.

Tshering Dolkar (2012) has reviewed six literatures from 1989 to 2010 and concludes that none of these works provide a succinct scenario of factors associated with substance abuse among young people in Bhutan. According to this review, the RBP has reported that that drugs abuse constituted about 86.7% of the total crime out of which 50% were students (implying young people). She further concludes that there is no sufficient studies to provide the complete picture of substance abuse problem in the country. She suggests the acute need for the research in this area.

The other studies are those that were done as the Government and international donors' reports. These reports do not exclusively include the studies on crime, substance abuse, and mental disorders. Nevertheless, the views that seem to converge among the various studies are that (1) research in youth criminality and substance abuse is too few though crucial, (2) substance abuse, alcoholism, unemployment, crime, mental disorders and irresponsible sexual behaviour are emerging as new generation problems in Bhutan.

Definitions of young people

The National Youth Policy (NYP) holds 'a youth as a person in the age range of 13-24 years'. The Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA, 2011) has set criminal age at 13 years. According the CCPA, 'A child in conflict with the law is a child who is above 12 years of age and the one found to have committed an offence' (chapter 6, 72). The UN's CRC framework considers two age groups: '13-19 years and 20-24 years'. UNFPA defines an adolescent as a person in the age group 10-19 years; 13-24 years as youth and 10-24 as a young person. For this study, we consider a person aged between 10-24 years as a young person. We also consider a separate age group of 20-24 years.

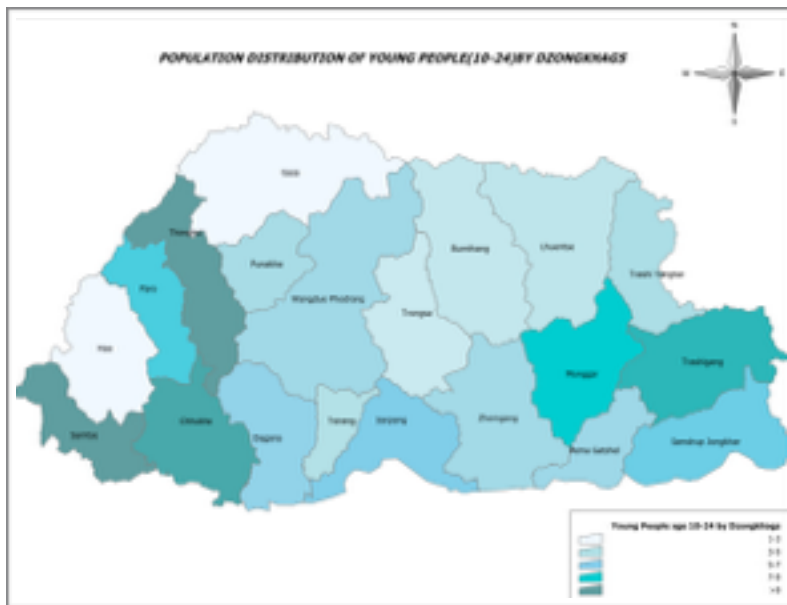
Some key statistics on young people in Bhutan

Bhutan Living Standard Survey (BLSS, 2012), Bhutan Multiple Indicators Survey (BMIS, 2010), Labour Force Survey (LFS, Annual) and National Health Survey (NHS, 2012) provides some information on young population in Bhutan. These nationally representative surveys were

conducted for purposes other than for understanding specific issues related to crime, substance abuse and mental disorders. Therefore, not much information related to the stated issues could be extracted out of these surveys.

According to the National Statistics Bureau's Dzongkha Population Projection, 2006-2015 (pp. 23), young people (10-24) constitute about 26.60% of the total population out of which 25.94% is male population and 27.56% the female (for 2015). The NHS, 2012 data gives relatively higher estimates, according to which young people make up about 37% of the total population (36.60% male and 37.72% female population). The National Labour Force Survey (NLFS, 2014) estimated youth (15-24 years) population at 145,611 with 69,080 males and 76,531 females. The median age of Bhutanese populations is 24 years, indicating a youthful populace (AHB, MoH, 2014, BLSS, NSB, 2012). The NHS data shows higher concentration of young people in Thimphu, Samtse, Trashigang and Samtse Dzongkhags (as shown in figure 1.1). Haa and Gasa Dzongkhags have the smallest population of young people.

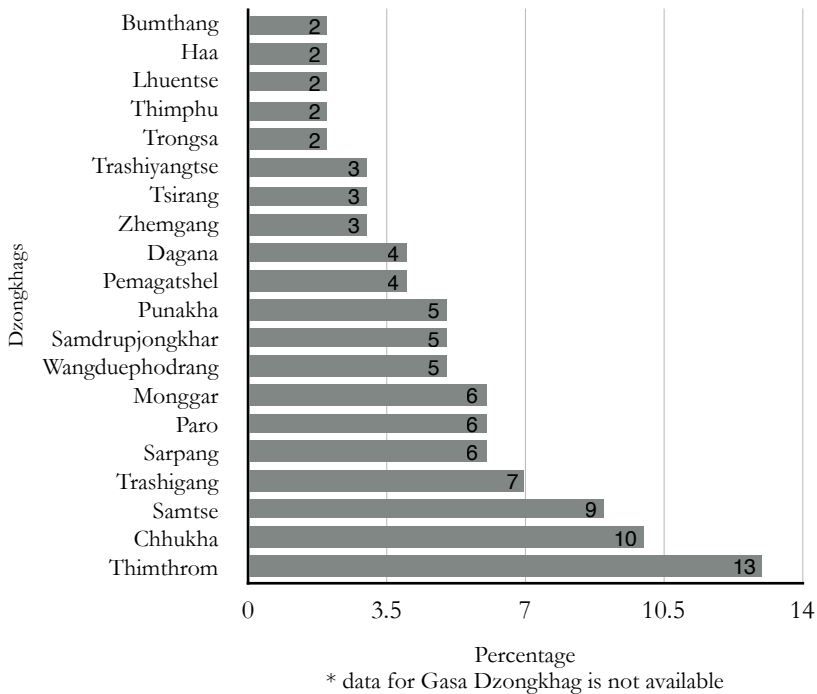
Figure 1.1: Distribution of young people across 20 Dzongkhags (based on NSH, 2012)



In total, there were 176,647 students up to Higher Secondary level (MoE, Annual Education Statistics, 2012). Out of this, 28.72% are at primary school level, 28.30% at lower secondary level, 22.62% at middle secondary level, and 18.51% are at higher secondary level. Approximately 2% comprised students in the ECCD programmes. From the total students of class X and below in 2012, 2.91% dropped out with almost equal representation of boys and girls (imputed from AES, 2012, SYB, NSB, 2013).

The education statistics (2012) shows that Thimphu (mainly Thimthrom), Chukkha, Samtse and Trashigang Dzongkhags have the higher number of students (figure 1.2). This must be the reason why the NHS, 2012 data was showing higher concentration of young people in these four Dzongkhags.

Figure 1.2: Distribution of students across the country (in percentage)



The 12th National Labour Force Survey (NLFS), conducted in 2014 shows that total labour force in Bhutan is about 348,742. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is estimated at 62.6%, slightly lower than 2013's LFPR of 65.3%. The national unemployment rate decreased by 0.3% from 2.9% in 2013 to 2.6% in 2014. The female unemployment rate is estimated at 3.5% and that of male at 1.9%. The female youth unemployment rate is estimated at 10% and that of male youth at 8.6%.² The unemployment among young people remains the highest.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the population of 15-19 years is sustained below 0.1% (AHB, 2015, pp. 19). The proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS is about 23.2% (AHB, MoH, 2015, pp.19).

Finally, the study (NSB, 2015, unpublished using BMIS, 2010) on multidimensional poverty among children (0-17) shows that 36.13% of the total population are children and 63.87% the adult population. About 13.22% of the Bhutanese children are multidimensionally (MPI) poor while 12.37% of the adults are the MPI poor. The MPI child poverty rate is much higher in rural areas (18.71%) than in urban areas (1.47%). Gasa Dzongkha has the highest MPI child poverty headcount rate of close to 40% (while in terms of the conventional income poverty Gasa is the lowest) and Bumthang Dzongkha has the lowest (2%). The other Dzongkhags with fairly high MPI child poverty rates are Monggar (21%), Wangduephodrang (21%), Samtse (19%), Chukkha (19%) and Trongsa (19%). About 3.90% of children are both the income and MPI poor, whereas 2.77% of adults are both the income and MPI poor.

The study aims and objectives

This study aims to draw a wider attention to areas of crime, substance abuse, and mental health problems associated with young Bhutanese people. We expect this study to stimulate public discourse on those issues affecting young people, help in effective decisions, and encourage more researches on delinquency and mental well being of young people.

² At the time of the compiling this monograph, the NLFS, 2014 was not available, so the information presented are sourced from <http://bhutanobserver.bt/8481-bo-news-about-12th-national-labour-force-survey-2014.asp>

Therefore, the study's objectives are:

First, to examine the nature, extent and trend of reported crime among young people in the country using the RBP's crime records. These include investigating the types of crime common among young people, whether the reported crime among young people is increasing or decreasing over the years, and the socio-demographic characteristics of young offenders.

Second, to explore the factors causing deviant behaviour among young people in the country. This is to be attained, firstly, by analysing the self-reported accounts collected by police when the offenders were arrested and registered, and secondly, by analysing the interview data collected from 44 young inmates in Chamgang Jail and the YDRC.

Third, to determine the type of mental illnesses among young people who had sought the out-patient medical services from the Psychiatric Department of JDWNRH, Thimphu and the yearly trend.

Fourth, to explore the nature and extent of alcohol and drugs abuse among young people using NHS, 2012 data.

Fifth, to examine the mental conditions (such as feeling of loneliness and worrying), suicidal thoughts and attempts among young people using the NHS, 2012 data.

Sixth, to present the views of local leaders on issues affecting young population in the local communities.

And seventh, to draw the policy implications on the various issues affecting some of our young people.

Research Questions

The individual authors will describe their methodologies in their own sections. Just as any scientific research consists of an investigation that seek to answer the questions related to problems, we have based our investigations on the following broad questions:

1. What types of crime are committed by young offenders in Bhutan?

2. What is the extent of the reported crime among young people?
3. What are the trends of reported crime among young people?
4. What are the possible factors that contribute to deviant behaviour and actions among young convicts?
5. What are the nature and extent of mental disorders among young people who had availed the medical services?
6. What is the yearly trend in hospital reporting of mental disorders among young population?
7. What are some general trends of substance and alcohol abuse among Bhutanese young people?
8. How common are the suicidal thoughts and attempts among young people in Bhutan?
9. What are the views and concerns of local leaders about youth issues in their communities?
10. What are the possible implications of crime, substance abuse and mental disorders among young Bhutanese people?

Scope and Limitations

Given some tendencies among the Bhutanese people to generalise from a small case, phenomenon or study, we want to strongly insist that the findings of the studies are explorative and suggestive of the problems. More surveys, population-based studies and action researches must be carried out to draw the national level conclusions.

The analysis of the RBP data cannot give the fuller picture of crime among young people. Many crimes get mediated and resolved at the individual and community levels or informally, and thus, remain unreported. Our analyses can only suggest that there is a problem of crime, but not determine how big is that problem at the national level. To get the complete picture of the problem, such analysis should be

supplemented by the analyses of nationally representative surveys such as youth and behavioural survey and crime victimisation survey. Similarly, the analysis of mental health problems is confined to the data of the JDWNRH, and that too, to the outpatients records. The results are again suggestive of the problems.

The qualitative studies are used to get deeper insights into a specific issue and phenomenon rather than to give the generalised picture. Our qualitative analysis is limited to mainly identifying the possible factors of crime from a smaller sample of young offenders though other aspects of crimes are also included. Our results for that reason are fairly preliminary and indicative of problems. More representative studies must be done to get more generalised and consummate picture of the causes of crime at the national level. The results of the analysis of interviews of 20 local leaders, for that matter, is also limited in scope, though it points out presence of the youth issues in the communities. The results of the analysis of the NHS 2012 data may be generalised to the national level since the NHS, 2012 is a national level survey. However, the analyses are explorative and descriptive.

The monograph's structure

In the next sections, Chapter II present the quantitative analysis of the RBP's crime statistics. The chapter is split into two sections: in section I, Sonam Gyeltshen discusses the theories, concepts, methodology, crime type, yearly trend, age and gender, distribution of crime across 20 Dzongkhags. This section includes reasons for committing crime as accounted by young offenders and recored by the RBP. The analysis is for the period July 2012 to July 2014. Section II presents the reported crime among young people in Thimphu. It includes offence types, crime calendar, age and type of offences, and the offenders' educational and occupational backgrounds. The period covered is January 2008 to September 2011.

Chapter III presents the analysis of the qualitative study conducted with 44 young offenders in the police custody and the YDRC. Lham Dorji describes the theories and concepts, methodology and findings. The findings are focussed on why young offenders had offended based on the offenders' own accounts, experiences, what their dreams and aspirations

are, what they think would prevent crime among youngsters like them; and some discussions on the policy implications.

Chapter IV is an explorative analysis of mental health problems with emphasis on young people who had availed medical services from the JDWNRH, Thimphu. Cheda Jamtsho describes type of mental disorders, age and characteristics, yearly trend, and possible implications of mental health problems.

In chapter V, Lham Dorji presents simple descriptive analysis of mental health conditions of young Bhutanese people. The analysis is based on the National Health Survey (2012) data. The mental conditions are broadly categories, namely: feeling of loneliness, being extremely worried, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicidal ideation and attempts.

In Chapter VI, Tashi Dorjee presents a short analysis of the interview records of 20 local leaders. His analysis is based on the local leaders' perceptions of the issues and challenges that young Bhutanese people are facing in their respective communities.

References

David, J. (2007). Drugs and alcohol abuse in Bhutan. International Centers for Health Concerns, Inc. www.williamwhitepapers.com

Lham Dorji (2005). Juvenile Delinquency as Emerging Youth Problem in Bhutan” in *Youth in Bhutan Education, Employment, Development*, Thimphu, Centre for Bhutan Studies.

Lham Dorji and Sonam Kinga (2005). Youth in Bhutan: Education, Employment and Development. Thimphu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies.

Ministry of Health, RGoB (2014). Annual Health Bhutan. Ministry of Health: Thimphu.

Ministry of Health, RGoB (2012). National Health Survey Report, 2012, Thimphu.

National Statistics Bureau (2015). Child Poverty Report (unpublished). Thimphu.

National Statistics Bureau (2012). Bhutan Living Standard Survey Report. Thimphu.

National Statistics Bureau (2010). Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey Report, 2010. Thimphu.

Tshering Dolkar (2012). Youth substance abuse in Bhutan: A challenge to the pursuit of gross national happiness. <https://drugabuse.gov/international/abstract/youth-substance-abuse-in-bhutan-challenge-to-pursuit-of-gross-national-happiness>

YDF and MOE (2006). The Situation of Bhutanese Youth in Bhutan. Thimphu.

CHAPTER II: THE ANALYSIS OF REPORTED CRIME AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN BHUTAN

Sonam Gyeltshen³

Introduction

The criminological studies in Bhutan are very limited. Other than regular crime records maintained by the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) and crime statistics produced by the National Statistics Bureau (NSB), only a few studies on crimes and their causes had been conducted using police data (Lham Dorji, 2005, Black & Stalker, 2006). In absence of crime victimisation surveys, determining an explicit prevalence and extent of crime in Bhutan has been very limited.

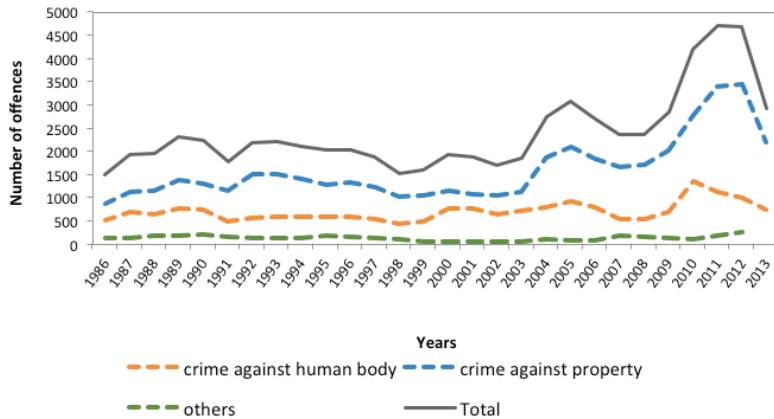
Crime data such as that of police and court records are useful, but not sufficient to generalise crime situation because they do not capture the unreported crimes, which is popularly referred to as the “dark figure of crime” (Gibbons, 1979). Nevertheless, criminologists could use such data to map the geography of crime and, to the extent possible, identify the socio-demographic characteristics of offenders. The official crime data are important to understand crime, and to draw public attention and support towards crime prevention. Crime statistics are important because looking at them is not simply about numbers, but about crime victims and the protection of the public well-being (Winsor, 2014).

The RBP’s crime records of the past two and half decades shows that the overall reported or registered crime in Bhutan had been steadily increasing. Lham Dorji (2005) noted: “not only is there variation in the frequency of crime across districts; there has been a steady increase in crime over time and across age categories”. Dorji’s study (2005) used only the RBP data, which though suggestive, is restricted to those who had already offended and covered only those cases reported to the police. It may otherwise also be possible that the reported crime had increased due to improved policing and reporting over the years.

³ Research Officer in the Socio-Economic Analysis and Research Division, National Statistics Bureau (NSB). In case anyone wish to comment or seek clarification, the author may be contacted at sgyelthen@gov.bt

It is too early to conclude whether the actual crime rate has increased in the recent years because the present study uses only the RBP data. However, as shown in Figure 2.1, the total number of recorded crimes has increased by over 100% from 1986 to 2013. This excludes motor vehicle offences. In 2013, the RBP recorded 2925 crimes against 1243 crimes in 1986. The reported crime have remained relatively stable until 2008 (with an average of 1672 crimes per year). Sudden rise in the reported crime was noted beginning 2009. It reached a record high of around 3500 cases in 2010 after which it started to drop.

Figure 2.1: Yearly trend of the reported crime from 1986-2013, Bhutan



Source: Statistical Yearbook (1987-2014), National Statistics Bureau

Among three broad categories of crime: (1) the crime against property was the most common one until 2013. The other broad categories are (2) the crime against human body, and (3) others. The crime against property remained almost stable until 2003 (as shown in figure 2.1). From 2005 to 2008, the crime against property and human body started to decline. Interestingly, during the same period there was a slight increase in other related crime. The crime against property peaked in 2011, and the crime against human body reached its highest point in 2010.

In many countries, young people are disproportionately represented in the statistics on crime and violence, both as victims and perpetrators. Studies in other countries found that violent crimes are usually committed at younger age. The adolescence (10-19 years) is considered as a stage of “breaking the rules”. The same trend seems to apply to Bhutan as well. Over the years, the crime among young people (12-24 years of age) has emerged as a new social issue and that of policy concern. In 2013 alone, the crime among young people constituted over 40% of the total recorded crimes. In response, the policy makers, researchers, development partners, and legislators have started debating on both the causes and potential solutions to this social issue. The National Youth Policy specifically stresses on achieving Gross National Happiness (GNH) by young people by ensuring a secular society, free from violence, crime, exploitation and intimidation, amongst many other initiatives (Department of Youth and Sports, 2010).

Understanding delinquency among young people has become very crucial in Bhutan. This study, therefore, is aimed at exploring the many facets of the crime among young people in the country. It looks into the nature of offences, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of young offenders, crime trend, and the possible determinants of crime.

Section I presents the analysis of the recorded crime among young people for the period July 2012 to July 2014 in the country. It includes crime trends, its distribution across age, gender and Dzongkhags. It also presents category of offences, possible determinants of crime, and incidence of the repeat offences.

Section II presents the analysis of crime among young people in Thimphu, using the recorded cases from January 2008 to September 2011.

(Note: In the present study, youth crime and crime among young people are used interchangeably and mean the same thing)

Section I: Analysis of crime among young people in Bhutan (July 2012-July 2014)

Data sources

Data for the analysis was sourced from the RBP's Youth Delinquent Monitoring System (YDMS). The YDMS is a database of crime history of young people (age below 25). It contains the bio-data of young offenders and other information such as time and place where crime took place and where it was recorded. The YDMS is purposed to monitor crime among young people in the country. It further contains self-reported reasons (by offenders) for criminal deviance.

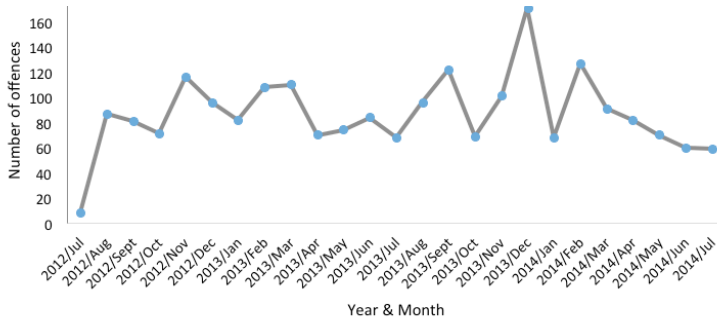
The YDMS dataset contained the crime records for the period from January 1, 2012 to August 4, 2014. However, for the present explorative analysis, the crime records from July 2012 to July 2014 could be used due to data inconsistencies and several missing observations [for some variables]. The dataset contained 2321 cases across 19 different categories of crime.

Seasonality of crime

Studies elsewhere have found that some the crimes (that young people carry out) take place during certain season and after certain hours. It must be for this reason, for example that, in 2015 Monggar Dzongkhag passed the curfew rule that prohibited a young person from being in the town after 8 pm. The rationale for this was that many young people were found to be loitering in town, often leading to crime.

To look into the seasonality of the crime, monthly cases from July 2012 until July 2014 (shown in figure 2.2) were taken into account. Five months were observed with high crime occurrence: November 2012 (116 offences), March 2013 (110 offences), September 2013 (122 offences), December 2013 (171 offences), and February 2014 (127 offences). These observations indicate that crime among young people was a year round phenomenon though with little seasonal variation.

Figure 2.2: Monthly trend of the reported offences among young people

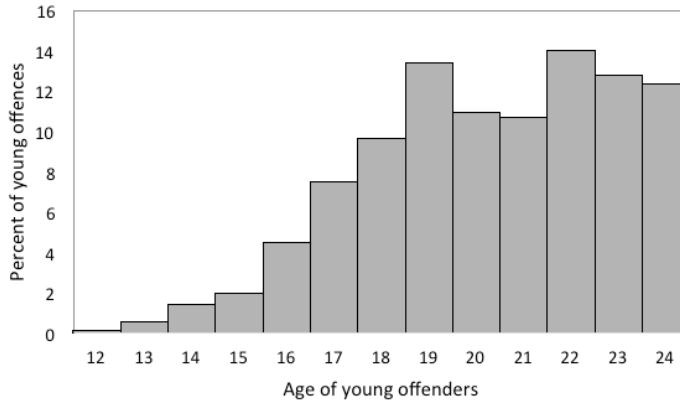


Demographic characteristics of young offenders

Age of offenders

The relationship between age and criminal offences has been observed since the beginning of the criminology. Age is one of the strongest factors associated with criminal behaviour (Ulmer & Steffensmeier, 2015). Figure 2.3 shows the distribution of offences by age of young offenders. It is observed that the registered crime increased by age until the age of 19. Not all adolescents showed the same propensity to commit crime, though on the whole, it increased during the entire adolescence. Data shows that after a small drop at the age of 20 and 21, crime again increased from age 22 to 24. The observations conform to the theory that the crime tends to peak in adolescence or early adulthood, and then decline with the increase in age (Quetelet, 1984).

Figure 2.3: Percentage of offences by age



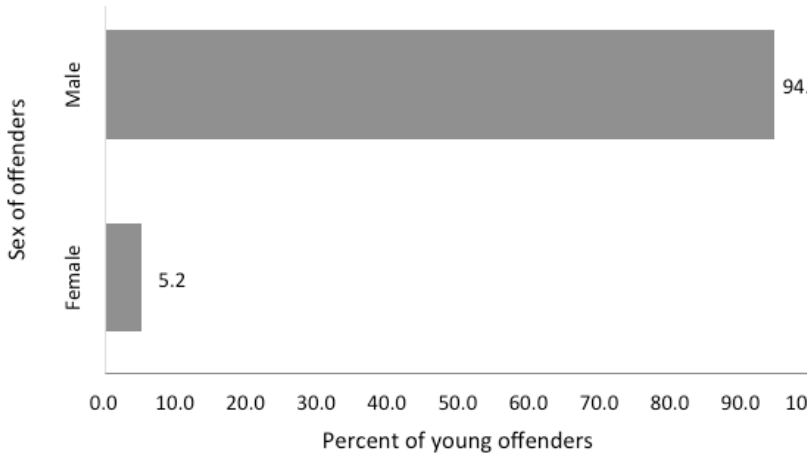
Gender

Gender difference in crime can usually be viewed from two perspectives: one as a perpetrator and another as a victim of crime. In the present case, data do not allow examining crime from these two viewpoints. The difference in crime rate and nature of crime between male and female can be affected by many factors, among which, cultural and biological factors are significant.

According to the General Strain Theory, more males generally tend to commit crime than the females (Agnew and Broidy, 1992). They concluded that male and female have different strains with male strain being more predisposed to violent and property crime, while female strain stimulating family violence. The emotional responses to strain differ between the males and females. Both sexes may respond to strain with anger, but anger experienced by the females are more likely to be accompanied by depression, guilt, anxiety and related states. Such accompanying emotional states reduces the chances of aggressive and confrontational crimes among the females than among the males (Broidy & Agnew, 1997).

Gender representation among young offenders in Bhutan follows the international trend, as indicated by the presence of more male than female offenders. Only about 5% of the registered offenders were the females; the rest were the males (figure 2.4). This suggest that crime among young people in Bhutan is predominantly the male phenomenon.

Figure 2.4: Distribution of young offenders by sex



The males and females tend to commit different crimes though sometime pattern of offending tend to be similar (Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2008). As shown in table 2.1, there is not much gender distinction when it comes to minor property and substance abuse offences. However, more males had committed serious crimes like homicide and offences related to firearms and weapons than the females. Data suggest that more males were indulged in all categories of crimes except prostitution and related offences.

Table 2.1: Category of crime by sex of offenders

Crime category	Adolescents (12-19)	Young Adults (20-24)	Total
Homicide	10	12	22
Assault, battery and related offences	228	391	619
Kidnapping and related offences	4	3	7
Sexual offences	16	32	48
Offences against infant, child, mentally disabled and incompetent person	1	0	1
Arson and related offences	1	1	2
Burglary, trespass and related offences	104	108	212
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	182	246	428
Money Laundering and smuggling	1	13	14
Forgery and related offences	2	3	5
Treason, terrorism and related offences	0	4	4
Offences against cultural and national heritage	6	6	12
Prostitution and related offences	1	0	1
Offences against the public welfare	35	61	96
Offences related to public and civic duties	4	11	15
Offences related to public order and tranquility	15	20	35
Offences related to firearms and weapons	9	21	30
Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	237	398	635
Total	856	1330	2186

Offence categories

Different crimes were classified as per the Penal Code of Bhutan (2004) into five major categories and twenty-five subcategories. Table 2.2 presents the main categories and sub-categories of crimes. Out of 2277 cases, 91 cases had not specified the offences, and so, they could not be placed under any group or sub-group.

The 'offences related to protected species, controlled and other harmful substances' was renamed as the 'offences related to controlled and other harmful substances'. This was done as there was no recorded case of offences related to the protected species (because data is restricted to that of young offenders).

Among five major categories, the offences committed by young people fall under three main categories: the 'offences against a person' (N=697, 32%), the 'offences against property' (N=642, 29%) and the 'miscellaneous offences' (N=665, 30%). The offences under other two categories, the 'commercial crime, fraud, corruption and related offences' (N=19, 1%), and the 'offences against state and public order' (N=163, 7%) were relatively lesser.

On disaggregating the crime sub-categories, the 'offences related to controlled and other harmful substance' (N= 635, 29%) came out to be the most common offence. The next in order were the 'assault, battery, and related offences' (N=619, 28%), and then the 'larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences' (428, 20%).

About 10% of the offences corresponded to the 'burglary, trespassing, and related offences' and 5% the 'offences against the public welfare'. Though a little less than 1% of the total crime was reported under homicide (also including attempts to homicide), it is to be noted that there were 22 such cases. Table 2.2 shows the details.

Table 2.2: Offence categories committed by young people

Category and subcategory of crime	No.	%
Offences against the person	697	31.9
Homicide	22	1.0
Assault, battery and related offences	619	28.3
Kidnapping and related offences	7	0.3
Sexual offences	48	2.2
Offences against infant, child, mentally disabled and incompetent person	1	0.0
Offences against property	642	29.4
Arson and related offences	2	0.1
Burglary, trespass and related offences	212	9.7
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	428	19.6
Commercial crime, fraud, corruption and related offences	19	0.9
Money Laundering and smuggling	14	0.6
Embezzlement and bribery	0	0.0
Forgery and related offences	5	0.2
Defamation and related offences	0	0.0
Offences against state and public order	163	7.5
Treason, terrorism and related offences	4	0.2
Offences against cultural and national heritage	12	0.5
Offences against judicial authority	0	0.0
Prostitution and related offences	1	0.0
Offences against the public welfare	96	4.4
Offences related to public and civic duties	15	0.7
Offences related to public order and tranquility	35	1.6
Miscellaneous offences	665	30.4
Offences against privacy	0	0.0
Computer offences	0	0.0
Offences related to firearms and weapons	30	1.4
Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	635	29.0
Corporate or other business associations criminal liability	0	0.0
Amendment and authoritative text	0	0
Total	2186	100.0

Table 2.3 shows the crime categories by different age groups. There was not much variation in the nature of offences between the two age groups: adolescents (10-19 years) and young adults (20-24 years). The most common offences between these two age groups were the ‘controlled substances, assault, battery and related offences’ and the ‘larceny, robbery and related offences’. However, subtle differences between the two groups were noted in some cases. For examples, slightly more adolescent offenders had committed the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences,’ and the ‘burglary, trespassing and related offences’. Contrarily, about 29.4% of young adult offenders had committed the ‘assault, battery related crime’ compared to 26.6% of the same offence committed by adolescent offenders. Further, about 29.9% of young adult offenders had committed the ‘offences related to controlled and other harmful substances’ compared to 27.7% adolescent offenders. Other crimes that occurred relatively more often among young adults than among adolescents were the ‘sexual offences, money laundering and smuggling’ and the ‘offences related to firearms and weapons’.

Table 2.3: Categorisation of crime by adolescents and young adults

Crime category	Adolescents (12-19)	Young Adults (20-24)	Total
Homicide	10	12	22
Assault, battery and related offences	228	391	619
Kidnapping and related offences	4	3	7
Sexual offences	16	32	48
Offences against infant, child, mentally disabled and incompetent person	1	0	1
Arson and related offences	1	1	2
Burglary, trespass and related offences	104	108	212
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	182	246	428
Money Laundering and smuggling	1	13	14
Forgery and related offences	2	3	5
Treason, terrorism and related offences	0	4	4
Offences against cultural and national heritage	6	6	12
Prostitution and related offences	1	0	1
Offences against the public welfare	35	61	96
Offences related to public and civic duties	4	11	15
Offences related to public order and tranquility	15	20	35
Offences related to firearms and weapons	9	21	30
Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	237	398	635
Total	856	1330	2186

Reasons for criminal deviance among young people

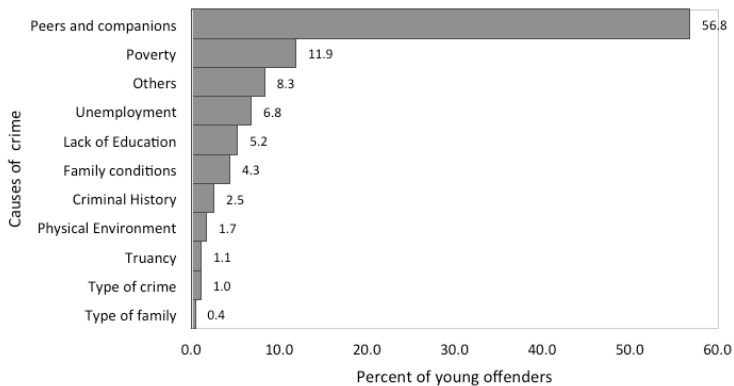
Though data disallowed comprehensive casual analyses, an effort was made, to the extent possible, to determine reasons for criminal deviance among young people. This is because understanding the determinants of crime is crucial to help develop crime control mechanism and design the rehabilitation schemes.

Several criminological theories shed light on criminal behaviour and their motivations. Some of the early theories attribute crime to an individual's rational choice, meaning that the individuals are rational human beings who can weigh the pros and cons based on which they make conscious and rational choices of whether or not to commit crime (Akers, 1990). Some individuals become criminally deviant for the reason that they do not see the benefits of adhering to conventional norms and social values. Such individuals believe that crime is a best way to improve personal social conditions (Ellwood, 1912). Other theories suggest that the social environment evokes criminal behaviour such as weak or broken family bonds, hostility towards school and community or other unfavourable social and economic conditions. Other theories hold that some individuals have specific genetic traits that affects their reaction when facing certain negative conditions.

Using 'reasons for committing crime' reported by offenders (2166 cases) at the time of arrests and registration, simple analysis was done to understand why they had committed crime. The result is shown in figure 2.5 according to which more than half (56.8%, 1210 offences) of the offences were reported to have been committed under peer pressure and in companionship. Another 12% (257) of young offenders reported poor socio-economic conditions necessitated them to commit crime. About 7% of young offenders reported that unemployment was the main reason for their criminal deviance. The self-reported reasons (given here) are not the top reasons as found out by the qualitative study (next chapter). Such incongruity in results is assumed to be due to the fact that at the time of arrests, the offenders would not have provided the reasons in detail as much as they had done when they were interviewed later using in-depth interview technique. However, the next chapter presents the results of the analysis of in-depth face-to-face interviews conducted among the

sampled young convicts. The qualitative study was conducted to find out why they actually had committed the various crimes. Moreover, offenders could have simply reported that friends influenced him to commit crime to feign that their friends were the main culprits, particularly with the motives to turn away the blame or escape being incarcerated.

Figure 2.5: Percent of young offenders by causes of crime



More than half of the offences recorded to have been associated with deviant peers (1210 offences) were the ‘assault, battery and related offences’ and the ‘offences related to control and other harmful substances’. Another 20% of the ‘burglary, trespassing and related offences’ and the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences’ were driven by peer pressure. Out of 257 cases or offences recorded to have been committed due to the offenders’ poor socio-economic conditions, 70% were related to the ‘burglary, trespassing and related offences’ and the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery, and related offences’.

Repeating Offenders

The RBP records (July 2012-July 2014) show that among young offenders, those who repeated offences constituted a small proportion of the total offenders. Of 2,412 reported cases, a large majority (1,882 cases or 90%) were first time offenders. About 9% of them had committed crimes for two times, while less than 3% had offended for more than three times. Five young offenders had committed crime for five times and

one person each committed seven, ten and eleven offences during the two years reference period. Table 2.4 presents the details.

Table 2.4: Repeat offenders by frequency of crime committed and percent

Frequency of offences	Numbers	Number of Young People	Percentage of young people
1 Time	1,882	1882	89%
2 Times	354	177	8%
3 Times	87	29	1%
4 Times	36	9	0%
5 Times	25	5	0%
7 Times	7	1	0%
10 Times	10	1	0%
11 Times	11	1	0%
Total	2,412	2105	100

Distribution of different crimes across Dzongkhags

Of 2,412 cases of crime among young people across the country recorded with the RBP, 85 cases had no mention of places where the crime occurred. Thimphu Dzongkhag recorded the highest number of cases (821 cases), constituting about 35% of the total recorded crimes among young people in the entire country. The Dzongkha-wise occurrence of crime was determined based on the police station where the crimes were registered. Chhukha, Paro, Wangduephodrang, and Sarpang Dzongkhags recorded 441(19%), 198 (9%), 156 (7%) and 140 (6%) cases respectively. Lhuentse and Gasa were two Dzongkhags with least recorded the crimes among young people. These two Dzongkhags registered 5 and 9 cases within two years timeframe.

In all Dzongkhags, young people constituted at least one-fourth of the total Dzongkhag population. Thimphu Dzongkhag had about 15% of the total young population in the country (in 2013). The other Dzongkhags

with higher concentration of young population were Chukkha, Samtse and Trashingang.

Gasa Dzongkhag recorded the lowest population of young people (4%). The crime among young people was recorded to be the highest in Thimphu Dzongkhag, closely followed by Paro and Chukkha Dzongkhags (figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Crime among young offenders by Dzongkhags

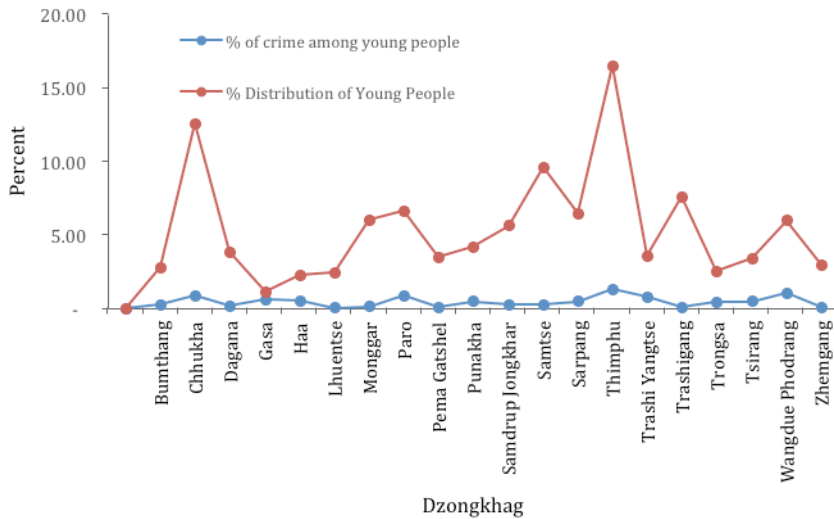


Table 2.5 shows the top crimes reported in the Dzongkhags. In 19 Dzongkhags, the ‘assault, battery and related offences’ were reported as one of the top three crimes. The ‘offences related to controlled and other harmful substances’ were listed as one of the top three crimes in 15 Dzongkhags, and the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences’ in 12 Dzongkhags. The ‘burglary, trespassing and related offences’ came out as one of the top three crimes in seven Dzongkhags, while the ‘sexual offences’ came out as one of the top three in three Dzongkhags. Just one Dzongkhag registered the ‘offences related to public order and tranquility’ as one of the topmost crimes.

Table 2.5: Number of Dzongkhags as against the type of offences committed by young people

Type of Offence	Number of Dzongkhags
Assault, battery and related offences	19
Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	15
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	12
Burglary, trespass and related offences	7
Sexual Offences	2
Offences against cultural and national heritage	2
Offences against the public welfare	2
Offences related to public order and tranquillity	1

With regard to the nature of crime in different Dzongkhags, the ‘sexual offence’ was reported to be common in Dagana, Gasa and Zhemgang Dzongkhags with Gasa and Zhemgang Dzongkhags recording two cases each within the reference period of two years. Dagana Dzongkhag reported seven sexual offence cases. This constituted almost half of all the crimes among young people reported in the Dzongkhag.

The ‘burglary, trespassing and related offences’ were common in Bumthang, Dagana, Paro, Punakha, Trashiyangtse, Trashigang and Trongsa Dzongkhags. More cases of the ‘assault, battery and related offences,’ the ‘offences related to controlled and other harmful substances’ and the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences’ were reported to be common in Thimphu and Chukha Dzongkhags (mainly Thimphu and Pheuntsholing *Thromdes*). See table 2.6 for details.

Table 2.6: Top-three reported crime across Dzongkhags

Dzongkhags	Top crime	Frequency
Bumthang	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) burglary, trespassing and related offences; and (3) Offences against public welfare	(1)13, (2)10, and (3) 6
Chukkha	(1) Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances; (2) larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences; and (3) assault, battery and related offences	(1) 230, (2) 68, (3) 63
Dagana	(1) Sexual offences; (2) burglary, trespassing and related offences; and (3) assault, battery and related offences	(1) 7, (2)5 (3) 3
Gasa	(1) Larceny, robber, armed robbery and related offences; (2) sexual offences; and (3) offences against cultural and national heritage	(1) 3, (2)2, (3) 2
Haa	(1) Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances; (2) offences related to public order and tranquility; and (3) assault, battery and related offences	(1)9, (2) 9 (4)
Lhuentse	(1) Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences; (2) Assault, battery and related offences	(1)3, (2)
Monggar	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences; and (3) offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	(1) 12, (2) 7 (3) 2
Paro	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) burglary, trespassing, and related offences; and (3) larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	(1) 54, (2) 48, (3) 40
Pemagatshel	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) larceny, robbery, armed robbery, and related offences; and (3) offences related to controlled and harmful substances	(1) 9, (2) 5, (3) 4
Punakha	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) burglary, trespassing and related offences; and (3) offences related to controlled and harmful substances	(1) 28, (2)15, (3) 14
S.Jongkhar	(1) Offences related to controlled and harmful substances; (2) larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences; and (3) assault, battery and related offences	(1)17, (2)9, (3) 7
Samtse	(1) Assault, battery & related offences; (2) offences related to controlled & harmful substances; & (3) larceny, robbery, armed robbery & related offences	(1) 33, (2) 22, (3)18
Sarpang	(1) offences related to controlled and harmful substances; (2) assault, battery and related offences; and (3) larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	(1) 50, (2) 44, (3) 26
Thimphu	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) offences related to controlled and harmful substances; and (3) larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	(1) 273, (2)206, (3) 183
Trashiyangtse	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) offences related to controlled and harmful substances; and (3) burglary, trespassing and related offences	(1) 19, (2) 16, (3)14
Trashigang	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) offences related to controlled and harmful substances; and (3) burglary, trespassing and related offences	(1) 3, (2) 8, (3) 9
Trongsa	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) burglary, trespassing and related offences; and (3) offences related to controlled and harmful substances	(1) 12, (2) 8, (3) 7
Tsirang	(1) Assault, battery and related offences; (2) larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences; and (3) offences related to controlled and harmful substances	(1) 55, (2) 28, (3) 36
W.Phodrang	(1) Assault, battery a& related offences; (2) offences related to controlled & harmful substances; & (3) larceny, robbery, armed robbery & related offences	(1) 56, (2) 36, (28)
Zhemgang	(1) offences related to controlled and harmful substances; (2) offences against public welfare; and (3) assault, battery and related offences	(1) 4, (2) 3, (3) 2

Section II: Analysis of crime among young people in Thimphu Thromdhe

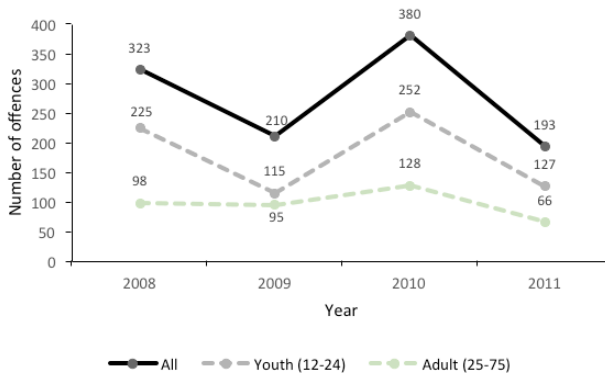
Data Description

For the analysis of crime among young people in Thimphu Thromdhe (city), the RBP's crime records for the period January 2008 to August 2011 were used. The data contains adolescent and youth crime records from 2005 to 2011, but all these records could not be used owing to some missing variables. There were a total of 1177 cases of the overall crime (includes crimes committed by all ages) recorded in Thimphu (with 21 variables) for the reference period. To analyse crime among young people, information about 753 young offenders, aged 12-24 years, were used. There were 82 cases of repeating young offenders. The mean age of the offenders was 24 years with the maximum of 75 and minimum of 12.

Crime trends in Thimphu Thromdhe

During the period 2008-2011, the overall (for all ages) reported crime showed some yearly variation. Lower number of crimes were registered in 2009 and 2011 compared to 2008 and 2010. The trend was same for crime among young people. However, the incidence of crime among young people remained higher than among adults during the reference period. It is impossible to explain why number of crime dropped in 2009 and 2011 (figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Yearly trend of crime among young people and adults

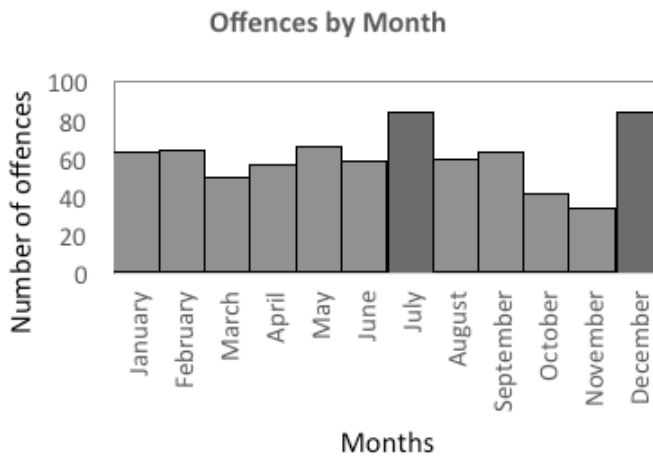


Monthly variation of crime among young people

Some monthly variation in the number of crimes among young people was observed. As shown in figure 2.8, the months with higher number of crimes were in July (84 cases) and December (84 cases). The lowest numbers of crimes were recorded in October (41 cases) and November (33 cases).

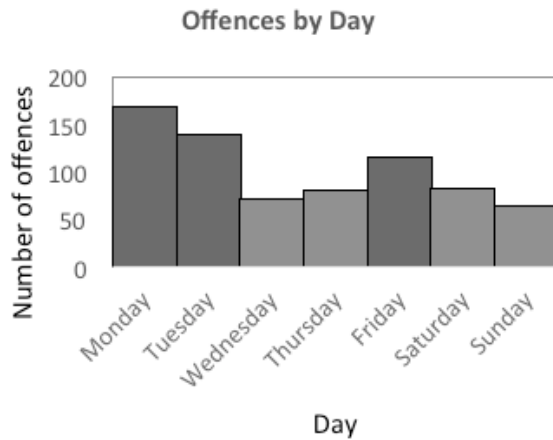
No concrete interpretation is possible from this results, but it seems the crimes among young people increases slightly during school vacations. This was what had been agreed during the consultative meeting held in Paro on 17 June, 2015. The representatives of different youth-serving agencies attended the meeting, including some police officers, principals and school teachers.

Figure 2.8: Crime variation by month



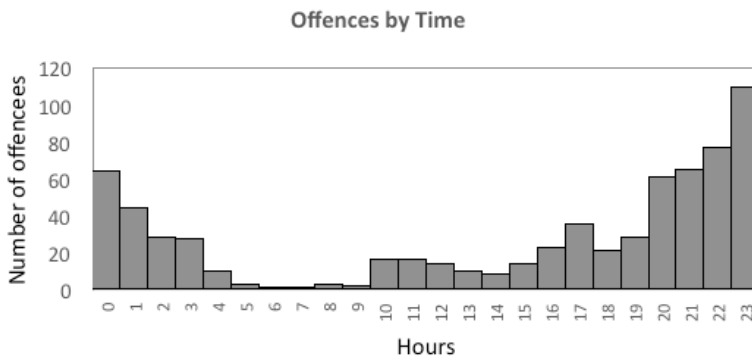
The crimes were expected to be higher during the weekends, but the results show that more crimes were recorded on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays (figure 2.9). Again, no definitive explanation is plausible for this.

Figure 2.9: Crime variation by day



As shown in figure 2.10, most of the offences began at 8 pm, peaking at 11 pm and then declining thereafter. Throughout the day crime remained comparatively low with the lowest crime recorded between 6 am and 7 am.

Figure 2.10: Crime variation by time



Categories of offence in Thimphu

Thimphu Thromde's RBP registered 1282 cases of crimes for all ages (12-75 years) during the reference period (2008-2011). The number of cases was more than the number of offenders because if the same offender had committed two types of crimes, it has been counted as separate cases for the purpose of categorisation. There were 107 cases wherein two cases were recorded with the same offender. Table 2.7 presents the details of different categories of crimes registered within Thimphu Thromde.

In respect to crime for all ages, the most common crime was the 'offences against property'. The next common crime was the 'offences against a person' and the 'miscellaneous offences'. The least common crime categories included the 'offences against state and public order', and the 'commercial crime, fraud, corruption and related offences'. Similar trend was observed for young offenders.

The most common offences among young people were the 'offences against property' followed by the 'offences against person', and the 'miscellaneous offences'. By sub-category of crime among young people; the 'assault, battery and related offences' was the highest crime, followed by the 'larceny, robbery, armed robbery, and related offences', and the 'offences related to controlled and other harmful substances'.

In the Penal Code, there are ten sub-categories of crimes under the 'offence against person'. The 'offences related to controlled and other substances' includes, other than the sale and possession of psychotropic and narcotic drugs, the harm done against the protected plant and animal species.

No offences against computer pornography, which is defined as the act of publishing and distributing obscene pictures or photographs on the computer over the internet, had been registered among young people. This offence is likely to become popular among young people with the availability of internet on the personal mobile smartphones.

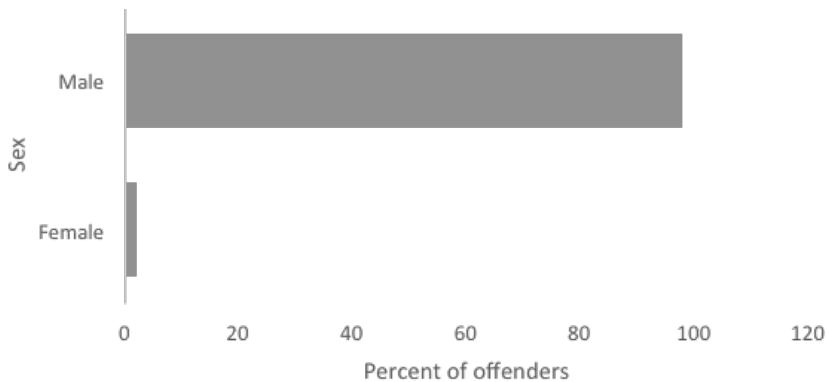
Table 2.7: Crime categories in Thimphu Thromde for all ages and young offenders

Category and subcategory of crime	All (12-75)		<i>f</i>	
	N	%	N	%
Offences against the person	386	30.1	261	32.0
Homicide	13	1.0	7	0.9
Assault, battery and related offences	370	28.9	254	31.2
Kidnapping and related offences	3	0.2	0	0.0
Sexual offences	0	0.0	0	0.0
Offences against property	449	35.0	296	36.3
Arson and related offences	1	0.1	0	0.0
Burglary, trespass and related offences	108	8.4	79	9.7
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	340	26.5	217	26.6
Commercial crime, fraud, corruption & related	83	6.5	15	1.8
Money Laundering and smuggling	4	0.3	0	0.0
Embezzlement and bribery	13	1.0	2	0.2
Forgery and related offences	64	5.0	12	1.5
Defamation and related offences	2	0.2	1	0.1
Offences against state and public order	144	11.2	83	10.2
Treason, terrorism and related offences	9	0.7	3	0.4
Offences against cultural and national heritage	3	0.2	1	0.1
Prostitution and related offences	0	0.0	0	0.0
Offences against the public welfare	101	7.9	62	7.6
Offences related to public and civic duties	10	0.8	6	0.7
Offences related to public order and tranquility	21	1.6	11	1.3
Miscellaneous offences	220	17.2	160	19.6
Offences related to firearms and weapons	79	6.2	64	7.9
Offences related to controlled & harmful substances	141	11.0	96	11.8
Total	1,282	100.0	815	100.0

Distribution of crime in Thimphu across gender and age (across all ages, 12-75)

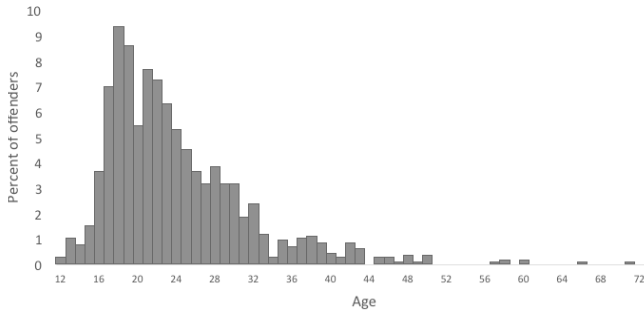
As shown in figure 2.11, offenders were predominantly male (96% with 1130 offences). Female offenders constituted just 4% (47) of the total offenders (1177) registered during the reference period. Such huge difference in the number of crimes between the males and females could be that various restrictive and stimulative factors influence the females to conform to social norms. Girls are normally subject to stronger family control; cultural norms are less tolerant to deviant behaviour among younger females.

Figure 2.11: Young offenders by sex, Thimphu



The number of offences increased by age among the adolescents. Data shows that while there were 3 (0.2%) offences committed by the 12 years olds, there were 43 (3.6%) offences committed by the 16 years olds, and 110 (9.3%) offences committed by the 19 years olds. The highest number of offences (n=639, 54%) were committed by young people in the age range of 19 to 24 years (as shown in figure 2.12). The offences then decreased among the adults and older people. It can be hence concluded that in Thimphu, the majority of registered crimes were committed by young people.

Figure 2.12: Offenders by age, Thimphu

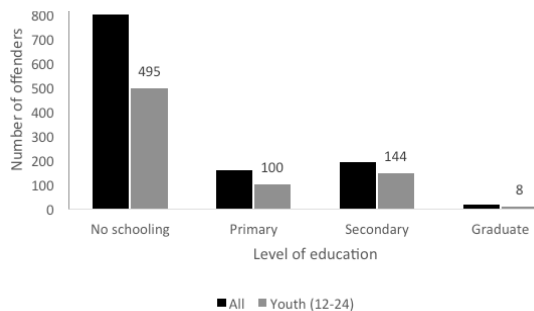


Distribution of crime by education and occupation

Education

The level of education in Bhutan are categorised as primary (PP-class 6), lower secondary (class 7-8), middle secondary (9-10), higher secondary (11-12), and graduate (above class 12). However, for the present purpose, all the secondary levels were clubbed together. As shown in figure 2.13, most (68%) of the offenders (for all ages) had no formal education. Less than 2% of the total offenders (1177) were in college or had college degree. Almost 15% of the offenders had secondary level of education, and 17% the primary education. Out of 801 young offenders (12-24), 495 (62%) reported they had no schooling.

Figure 2.13: Offenders by level of education



Going by the nature of offences and education level of offenders, the ‘assault, battery and related offences’ were the most common offences among the offenders with secondary and graduate education. The ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences’ were the top crimes among those offenders with primary education, while the ‘offence related to controlled and other harmful substances’ were the topmost crimes among offenders with no schooling.

Table 2.8 shows three top crimes among the offenders with different levels of education including those without schooling. One thing to note is that the ‘offence related to forgery, embezzlement and bribery’ emerged as the third common offences among offenders with graduate education. This was expected because some of these offenders with graduate degree would have had been employed.

Table 2.8: Top three crimes by level of education

Education Level of Offender	Top three reported crimes	No. of Reported crimes	%
No schooling			
	Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	263	32.47
	Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	230	28.40
	Assault, battery and related offences	82	10.12
Primary			
	Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	53	30.64
	Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	32	18.50
	Assault, battery and related offences	31	17.92
Secondary			
	Assault, battery and related offences	63	30.88
	Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	49	24.02
	Offences related to firearms and weapon	24	11.76
Graduate			
	Assault, battery and related offences	8	38.10
	Forgery and related offences	3	14.29
	Embezzlement and bribery	3	14.29

From the total 1174 (3 offenders had no record of whether they were students or non-students), about 12% were recorded as studying at the time of committing offences. About 88% of them were recorded as non-student at the time of crime. For both student and non-student offenders, the top three offences were the ‘assault, battery and related offences’, the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related crimes’, and the ‘offences related to controlled and other harmful substances’. Of 145 student offenders, 40%(n=57) of them had committed the ‘assault, battery, and related offences’. Details are provided in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9: Type of crime by student and non-student

Crime Type	Student				Total
	Yes		No		
	N	%	N	%	
Homicide	0	0	5	100	5
Assault, battery and related offences	57	15.49	311	84.51	368
Kidnapping and related offences	0	0	3	100	3
Arson and related offences	0	0	1	100	1
Burglary, trespass and related offences	15	14.02	92	85.98	107
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	30	9.04	302	90.96	332
Money Laundering and smuggling	0	0	1	100	1
Embezzlement and bribery	1	7.69	12	92.31	13
Forgery and related offences	0	0	50	100	50
Defamation and related offences	0	0	1	100	1
Treason, terrorism and related offences	0	0	7	100	7
Offences against cultural and naational heritage	1	33.33	2	66.67	3
Offences against the public welfare	9	10.11	80	89.89	89
Offences related to public and civic duties	0	0	3	100	3
Offences related to public order and tranquility	0	0	16	100	16
Offences related to firearms and weapons	17	36.96	29	63.04	46
Offences related to controlled and other harmful substances	15	11.63	114	88.37	129
Total	145	12.35	1,029	87.65	1,174

Occupation

Young offenders' occupations were categorised into major groups as per the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) classification system. About 50% of them were unemployed and 12.3% were students. Less than one percent of them were professionals and managers. Details are presented in table 2.10. The result indicates that unemployment was one of the causes of crime among young people in Thimphu Thromde.

Table 2.10: Young offenders by occupation category

Occupation	Freq.	Percent
Unemployed	585	49.7
Students	151	12.83
Service and sales workers	128	10.88
Elementary occupations	125	10.62
Operators, assemblers	78	6.63
Professionals	29	2.46
Craft workers	23	1.95
Skilled agricultural workers	21	1.78
Trainees	14	1.19
Clerical support workers	11	0.93
Technicians	7	0.59
Managers	5	0.42
Total	1,177	100

Repeating offenders

Data spanning the year 2005 to 2011 was specifically used to determine the number of repeated offenders. Some of the offenders might have had been registered with the RBP prior to 2005, but such offences had been excluded.

About 92% of the offenders were first time offenders and 6% of them were offending for the second time. There was only a single person who had committed seven offences. The details are presented in table 2.11. The number of cases and offenders are shown to indicate that some offenders had offended repeatedly, and thus, number of cases is always more than number of offenders.

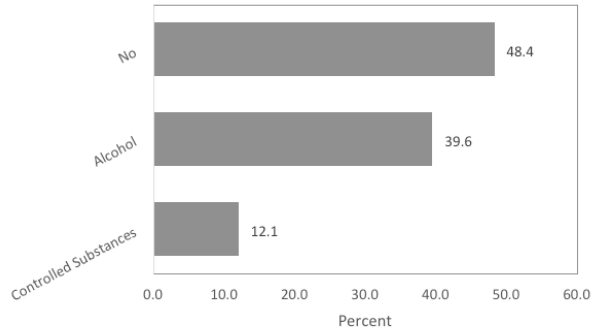
Table 2.11: The repeat offenders and number of offences

Offences	Number of Reported crimes	Percent	Number of offenders	Percent
1 X 1	469	82.28	469	91.8
1 X 2	62	10.88	31	6.1
1 X 3	24	4.21	8	1.6
1 X 4	8	1.4	2	0.4
1 X 7	7	1.23	1	0.2
Total	570	100	511	100

Influence of alcohol and controlled substances

It was recorded that 40% of the crimes among young people were committed under the influence of alcohol, and 12% under the influence of controlled substances (figure 2.14). These show that abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs were the main triggers for criminal deviancy among young people, though these may not be the root causes. The result conforms to the findings of the qualitative study [given] in the next chapter.

Figure 2.14: Classification of young offenders by whether they are under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances



The three most common crime committed under the influence of alcohol, were the ‘assault, battery and related offences’, the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery, and related offences’, and the ‘offences against the public welfare’. The three common offences that were not committed under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances were the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery, and related offences’, the ‘assault, battery and related offences’, and the ‘burglary, trespass and related offences’. Table 2.12 presents the details.

Table 2.12: Top three crimes committed by young people when intoxicated and non-intoxicated

Offences with and without influence of alcohol	Freq	Percent
Offences without influence of alcohol or drugs (Total: 618)		
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	202	33%
Assault, battery and related offences	175	28%
Burglary, trespass and related offences	65	11%
Offences under influence of alcohol or drugs (Total: 518)		
Assault, battery and related offences	191	37%
Larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences	124	24%
Offences against the public welfare	67	13%

Conclusion

The results have a limited generalisability, as data were drawn only from the RBP records. To derive a comprehensive idea of crime scenario in the country, such study should be complemented by studies based on crime survey or crime victimisation survey data. This do not imply that such study is not useful. In fact, it did present many aspects of crime scenario like nature of crime, occurrence, trend, possible causes, and socio-demographic characteristics of offenders.

Over the years, crime registered with the RBP had increased from 1243 cases in 1986 to 2926 cases in 2013. Crime among young people was becoming more prevalent with over 40% of the offenders in 2013 being below the age of 25 and also largely the male phenomenon.

The most common crime among young people were the ‘offences related to controlled and other harmful substance,’ the ‘assault, battery and related offences’, and the ‘larceny, robbery, armed robbery and related offences’.

Several factors were identified for deviant behaviour among young people: peer pressure, unemployment, poor family characteristics, education deprivation, family disruption, and so on. Most crimes took place in companionship with peers and under the influence of alcohol and controlled substances.

Across the Dzongkhags, Thimphu registered the highest number of offences followed by Chhukha, Paro, Wangduephodrang and Sarpang. Lhuentse and Gasa were two Dzongkhags with least recorded offences.

Taking the case of Thimphu Thromde, the majority of the offences were registered in July and December. Crime peaked at night hours (between 8 and 11 pm). The majority of young offenders were unemployed, while students and young people with meagre salaries constituted a substantial proportion of the young offenders.

References

Akers, R. L. (1990). Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Social Learning Theory in Criminology: The Path Not Taken. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 654.

Bhutan, R. G. (2004). *The Penal Code of Bhutan*. Thimphu.

Broidy, L., & Agnew, R. (1997). Gender and Crime: A General Strain Theory Perspective. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 287.

Department of Youth and Sports, M. o. (2010). *National Youth Policy 2010*. Thimphu.

Dorji, L., & Kinga, S. (2005). Juvenile Delinquency as Emerging Youth Problem in Bhutan. In L. Dorji, *Youth in Bhutan: Education, Employment, Development*. Thimphu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies.

Ellwood, C. A. (1912). Lombroso's Theory of Crime. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 716-718.

Gibbons, D. C. (1979). *The Criminological Enterprise: Theories and Perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Quetelet, A. (1984). Research on propensity of crime at different ages. Schwartz, J., & Steffensmeier, D. (n.d.). *The Nature of Female Offending: Patterns and Explanations*. Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Schwartz, J & Steffensmeier, D. (2008). *The nature of female offending” patterns and explanations*. Jones and Barlett Publishers.

Ulmer, J. T., & Steffensmeier, D. (2015). *The age and crime relationship social variations, social explanations*. SAGE publications.

Winsor, T. (2014, November 18). Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), UK. Retrieved from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) web site: <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/news/news-feed/victims-let-down-by-poor-crime-recording/>

CHAPTER III: THE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS IN THE POLICE CUSTODY

Lham Dorji⁴

Introduction

The central research problem that I wanted to address using the qualitative research approach was to explore the possible determinants of the criminality among young Bhutanese prisoners. For this study, some young convicts, hereon referred to as 'the participants', were selected from Chamgang Central Jail and the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP)-managed Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre (YDRC), Tsimasham. The factors that we commonly account for deviant behaviour among young people are poverty, family dysfunction, substance abuse, peer pressure, unemployment, and low self-esteem. Premised on the interviews with the participants, this study mainly tried to seek answers to the question: what were the most probable reasons or factors for young convicts resorting to deviant behaviour and criminal activities?

This entailed me to look into the participants' personal, family and community's characteristics, attitudes and behaviour, life experiences, and their dreams and aspirations. Listening to their stories was reckoned imperative to uncover the possible factors that influenced them to criminal deviancy. This approach was undertaken with the hope to fetch a unique understanding of, and deep insights into why young offenders had behaved the way that predisposed them to the police custody.

Not much research in criminology has been conducted until now in Bhutan. Therefore, this qualitative study represent an attempt to serve that gap in its own little way. I hope this study will help to draw our attention to this area of inquiry in criminology, and encourage other researchers to conduct more specific research and policy analyses of high relevance to the policy decisions.

⁴ Deputy Chief Research Officer and the Head of the Socio-Economic Analysis and Research Division of National Statistics Bureau. He worked with the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research as multidisciplinary researcher for about 10 years. He can be reached at lhamdorji@gmail.com

Theories and Rationale

Some Bhutanese people going against the law is not a recent phenomenon; it existed in the country since the ancient time. The difference was that the punishments meted out to the offenders then were different and stricter, and crime rate then was much lower than it is today. Why has the crime rate, especially among young people, been increasing ever since Bhutan embraced development and modernisation? There are several plausible crime causation theories, which I would discuss briefly to provide some broad ideas about why people commit crime.

I hold my view that deviant behaviour among young people are not an isolated phenomenon, but are the symptoms of many underlying problems, which we need to first understand and then manage. Several theories have been developed to explain the causes of deviancy among young people such as early theories (forces of nature and spirits); classical school (rational personal choice); biological theories (hereditary); psychological theories (personality and childhood dysfunctions); sociological theories (social ecology and social learning); and critical theory (societal inequities, capitalism, and repression). Some theories relate criminal deviance to biological and psychological factors, while others attribute it to ecological factors. There is no single accepted theory that has advanced that far to explain all aspects of deviant behaviour.

I have referred the existing theories of crime causation to get some ideas about how to conduct the interviews and content analysis of interview texts or data, though the qualitative research is supposed to be iterative in nature. However, I did not make these theories so explicit in the beginning of the study so that they did not disproportionately shape the outcomes of the qualitative approach I had used. These major theories are outlined briefly.

The classical theory holds that it is the individual's rational choice that influence a person towards deviant behaviour; and that his or her rational choice is grounded in the desire to gain pleasure and avoid pain. Many young people in Bhutan seem to commit crime, wrongly assuming that it would bring them the fulfilment of their desires for pleasure. In my previous study on juvenile delinquency, I have found that children had committed crimes such as theft and burglary, believing that possessing

money and commodities that they usually lack could bring them pleasure and happiness.

The psychological theories ascribe deviant behaviour to cognitive and personality disorders. Psychological illnesses could either be the real physical disorder of the brain or disorders stimulated by the external environment. Modernisation has brought about drastic changes in our social, cultural, and economic environments such that some external stimulus have become so toxic and potent enough to stimulate abnormal personalities and deviant behaviour among our young people. For example, the cases of personal disorders associated with substance abuse and the associated criminal outcomes.

The sociological theories attribute juvenile delinquency to societal factors such as socioeconomic condition, inequality and deprivation, family dysfunction, and the breakdown of social relationships, peer pressure, and subcultural norms (that are in conflict with the traditional norms of the society).

The critical theories explain that deviant behaviour is caused by prevailing inequities within the society, where some members are better-off at the cost of others; and that the latter resort to criminal antagonism against elites or the governments for socioeconomic inequalities. For example, the unemployed young people may be carrying out the criminal activities out of frustration of being unemployed.

Among many theories, the most relevant theories to the current research seem to be the classical school theory, psychological theories, sociological theories, and critical theory.⁵ The naturalism, demonology and biological theories are not considered, though some people in our society with traditional orientation still ascribe criminal deviance to the forces of evils or some biological defects.

Research Objectives

The central research problem that I wanted to address here was to understand the possible factors that actually induced criminality among the research participants. The study, though limited in many ways, was

⁵ Since these theories are well-established, I have not cited their proponents and authors.

expected to come out with the results that might offer some understanding of what causes young people to go against the law. To reiterate, the ultimate aim was to generate information that might generate some evidences to inform preventive or corrective measures and also the report that might serve as the basis for other researchers to conduct more specific criminological studies.

Research Design

I chose the mix of grounded theory, phenomenological, and case study design. It was, to a limited extent, a grounded theory approach because some theories of criminality causation were referred to help me design the questions for the face-to-face interviews. The qualitative data (set of interviews) were evaluated, compared, and analysed to achieve certain theoretical explanations of criminal behaviour amongst the participants. It was partly phenomenological because the interviews provided uniqueness of each individual's lived situations and experiences. Each participant had his own life's reality and experiences, which were subjective. Some of their accounts were presented as quotations or cases.

Sampling and selection of participants

I assumed that it was not necessary to collect data from everyone to get the generalisable findings. The qualitative approach is all about focusing on a particular issue where generalisability and comparability are traded for internal validity and contextual understanding. Time-consuming and expensive as the qualitative approach is, it was important to be prudent to select only the sub-set of population. In view of this, I used the purposive sampling method. The purposive sampling approach was chosen, as it allowed me to select a group that could provide the best information and manifestations of the crime (they had committed) and deeper insights into crime, rather than for an empirical generalisation from a sample to a population.

The participants were selected as per certain preselected criteria relevant to the research questions. It was assumed that young convicts could be in the best position to shed light on the complex relationships between crime and other factors. For the in-depth face-to-face interviews, 44 young convicts were selected. The sample size was determined by the time constraint rather than it being based on the theoretical saturation

sample size approach (stopping data collection at a point when it is unlikely that any new information would be produced).

To select the participants, we (NSB) wrote to the RBP to sample out a maximum of 30 participants from each of the Central Jail and the YDRC.⁶ The criteria for selection were: those convicts in the age group 24 years and below, those who the prison authorities felt could represent other young inmates, and those who could articulate well. However, in providing the pre-selection criteria, we made a mistake of not informing the RBP that the study participants should be the combination of young people with some formal education and the illiterate ones. Towards the completion of the interviews, we realised all the participants had some education (highest class 12). When we informed the prison authorities about the mistake, they clarified that the literate ones were selected, believing they could participate better in our interviews than those without any education. There was nothing we could do, as requesting for additional participants would require us to process another round of approval-seeking from the RBP Headquarter.

In-depth Interviews

I and two research interns interviewed 44 convicts within four days. We used semi-structured and open-ended questions. The need to conduct semi-structured interviews rather than unstructured ones was to maintain certain level of consistency between three of us. Nevertheless, we tried to adjust some questions according to what was learnt in the course of interviews, and to maintain certain level of flexibility when it came to probing.

The interviews were designed optimally for collecting data on an individual's personal history, experience and perspective, and to allow greater spontaneity and interactions between us and the participants, basically to understand how crime was produced. We tried to adapt our interviews in the way the participants wanted to respond. Questions that

⁶ Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre (YDRC) functions according to the Rules and Regulations framed as per the Prisons Act 2009. The YDRC is mandated to provide shelter for rehabilitative and reformative education and training for those youths in conflict with law for their eventual re-integration into mainstream society as productive and contributing members; and to provide them vocational skills, training, education and counselling as a part of rehabilitative and reformative programs. The YDRC takes in the youths in conflict with law who are convicted for more than one year.

led to typical 'yes' or 'no' type responses were avoided to the possible extent. We ensured that our questions were mostly worded to elicit the responses to 'what' and 'how' for the reason that responding to question 'why' is generally more difficult. We spoke in the languages the participants felt comfortable with, though most of them could understand and speak English and Dzongkha. To increase the verisimilitude, the participants were given repeated chances to clarify and expand their views. This was done to increase the validity and trustworthiness of their responses.

We adhered to the empathic neutrality approach, that is, seeking information from the participants without much personal judgement, but being open and sensitive to their views and beliefs, and showing them our respects and responsiveness. We listened to them carefully without any indication of disinterest or lack of curiosity. We found that the participants were eager to be heard and seemed to have believed about the benefits of giving truthful responses to themselves and other young people at risks of committing crime. Except for the questions relating to their sense of justice in the society and prison treatment, we were sure that other questions were less prone to untruthful responses.

Data Analysis

The interviews yielded a thick description of personal experiences on how and why they resorted to delinquency, which were tape-recorded. The MAXQDA was used to analyse this voluminous information, collected through interviews. This qualitative data analysis software allowed the use of more flexible and iterative style of categorising and coding responses. The interviews (audio-recorded) were transcribed into the texts. It was rigorous, time-consuming and difficult processes. We (who were involved in interviewing) transcribed the audio-records. Each individual case was carefully transcribed, trying to avoid [as far as possible] the insertion of a personal judgement. The transcripts were to be the basis for textual analysis.

After transcripts were prepared, the texts were assigned with a series of structural codes, which were question-based and extended to discrete probes that were repeated across multiple files of dataset (of each participant). Similar ideas, concepts, themes were coded to classify and quantify the qualitative data through frequency and co-occurrence

evaluation. The frequency and saliency of particular words or phrases and other semantic elements in the texts were then tallied and evaluated to determine which of them were talked about most, and which the least. Both manifest and latent coding were used. The manifest coding process is the coding of actual words and their denotations, while the latent coding is coding phrases or paragraphs that implied the same meaning.

One of my concerns about the content analysis (using coding approach) was the risk of losing the original statements that reflected the participants' subjective experiences and interpretations of the phenomenon. A phenomenological approach of data analysis was adopted along with the content analysis to minimise this risk. This involved highlighting significant statements or quotes that could provide an understanding of the issues from the participants' perspectives in their own words. The quotes were selected to support the results of the content analysis, and presented with pseudo-names. So, the analysis constituted the combination of frequency evaluation and phenomenological approach. The results are presented, wherever possible, using iconographies .

Limitations

A small sample of convicts selected by using the purposive sampling, that too, from just two police facilities might limit the generalisability of the study to the whole population. Further, the study included only the educated inmates (selection bias), and thus, the findings might be unique to them. The question that arose was what could have been the findings had the convicts without any education been included. The other limitation was that we failed to interview women convicts. It is also possible that not all participants were truthful in their responses, especially while responding to questions related to their assessment of prison treatment and sense of justice in the society. Moreover, this study included only the convicts, that is, those who had been exposed to risk factors and got into crime, but it did not include young people who were at risks, but not drawn into criminal behaviour due to certain protective factors. Identifying both risk and protective factors could have been more instrumental and useful for designing juvenile crime preventive measures.

Ethical concerns

The permission to interview the inmates of Chamgang Jail and the YDRC was obtained from the Chief of Police. It was impossible to seek parental consent for the participants below 18 years old, residing in the YDRC. In such cases, the written assents were sought from the individual participant and the informed consents from the YDRC authority.

Prior to exercising the assent and consent forms, the participants were explained about the purpose of the study and its potential benefits to the society in the form of information.

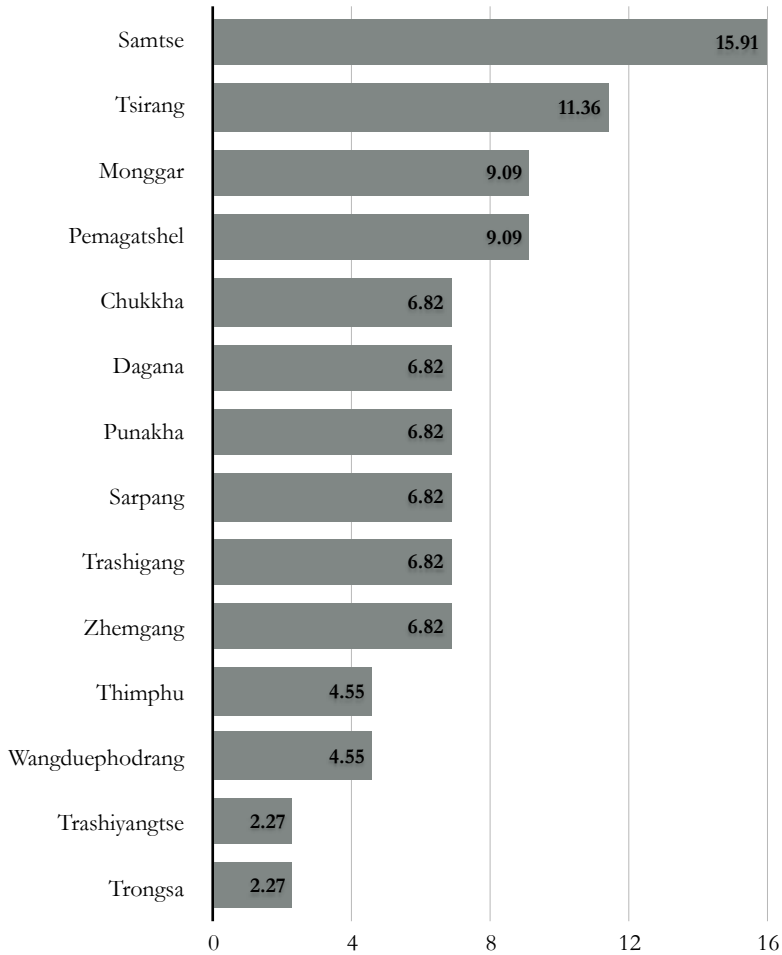
Three fundamentals that we considered for the interviews were: (1) respects for the convicts, (2) no commitment of individual benefits; and (3) ensuring them their anonymity and the confidentiality of information they disclosed to us. Some of the participants were expecting that our interviews might lead to their release or reduction in sentence. We clarified them that our main aim was to understand how and why young people commit crime and to come out with a research report that could inform policies and interventions.

FINDINGS

Profile of the participants

The analysis began by looking into the profiles of the participants. In the sample, the mean age of the participants was 20 years (confidence interval 19-21). All the participants were males. This could be due to the fact that the interviews were conducted in Chamgang Central Jail and the YDRC, where only the male prisoners are housed. The Dzongkhags of origin of the participants are given in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Dzongkhags of origin of the participants



In table 3.1, some other socio-economic characteristics of the participants are presented. The educational background refers to the participants' education, while the rest of the socio-economic indicators are related to their families.

Table 3.1: The participants' socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
1. Educational background		
Higher Secondary	7	15.91
Lower Secondary	17	38.64
Middle Secondary	14	31.82
Primary	6	13.64
2. Occupation of the Household Head		
Farmer	16	36.36
Wage-worker	10	22.73
Business	6	13.64
Housewife	4	9.09
Civil servant	3	6.82
Police	3	6.82
Ex-army	2	4.55
3. Parental status		
Both parents	29	65.91
Parents divorced	5	11.36
No parent	1	2.27
Single parent	6	13.64
Widowed parent	3	6.82
4. Poverty perception of their own families		
Neither rich nor poor	26	59.09
Poor	15	34.09
Rich	3	6.82

Figure 3.2 presents the participants' pre-sentencing status and way of living. The majority of the participants had been student before being arrested and subsequently convicted. The 'employed' includes those who were working with either the Government or private agencies.

Figure 3.2: Pre-sentencing status of the participants

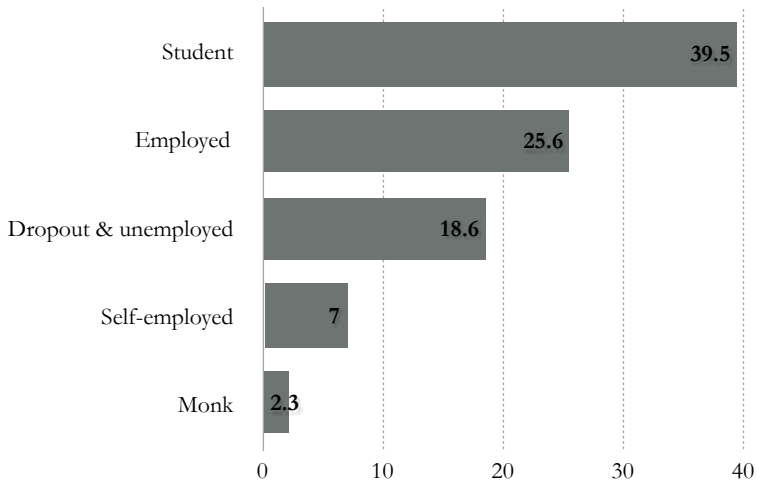
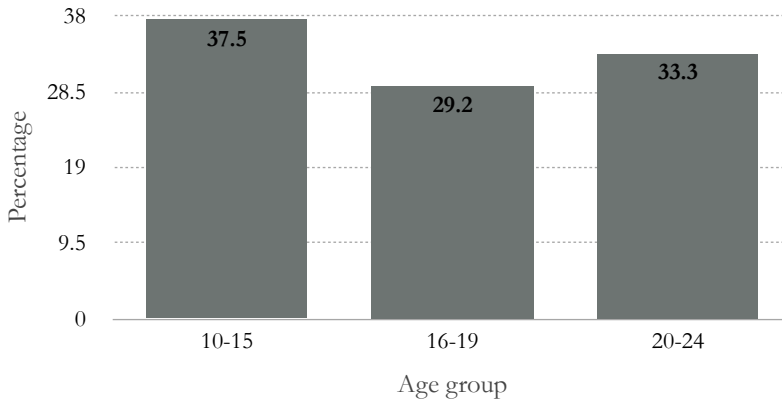


Figure 3.3 present the age-groups to which the participants belonged when they first committed the crimes. Most of them were in the age group of 10-15 years when committing their first offences.

Figure 3.3: Age at first offence



In figure 3.4, the frequency of offences the participants had committed are given. The majority of them were the first-time offenders; there were a substantial number of them who had offended more than three times.

Figure 3.4: Number of offences committed

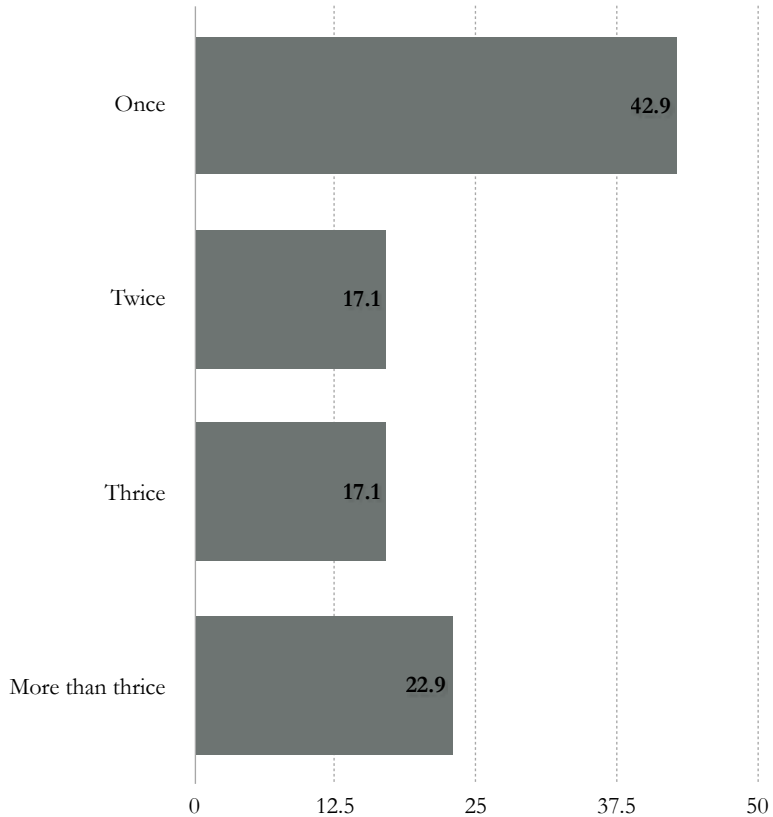
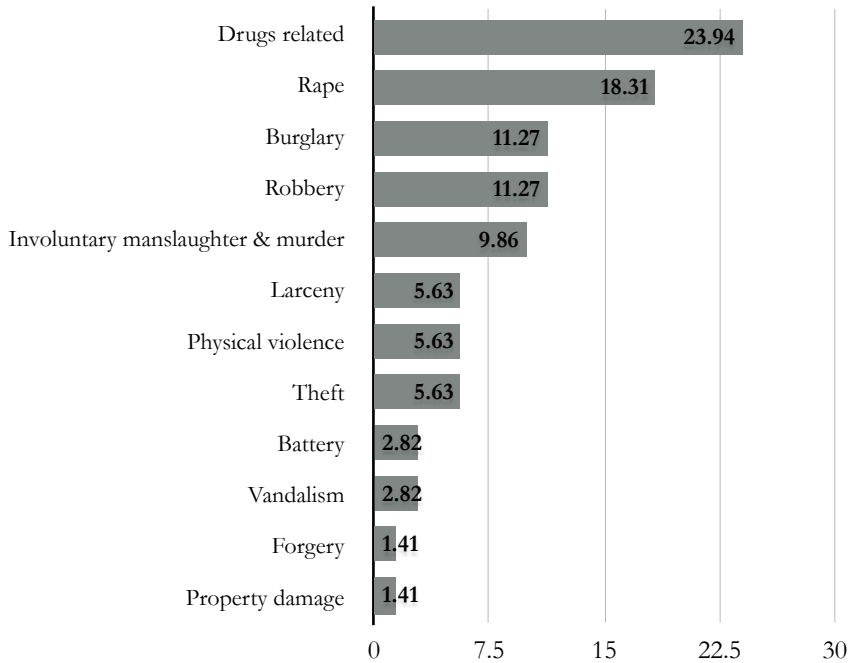


Figure 3.5 presents the distribution of the participants by various crimes for which they were sentenced. About 24% of them had been sentenced for the offences related to contraband substances followed by rape cases.

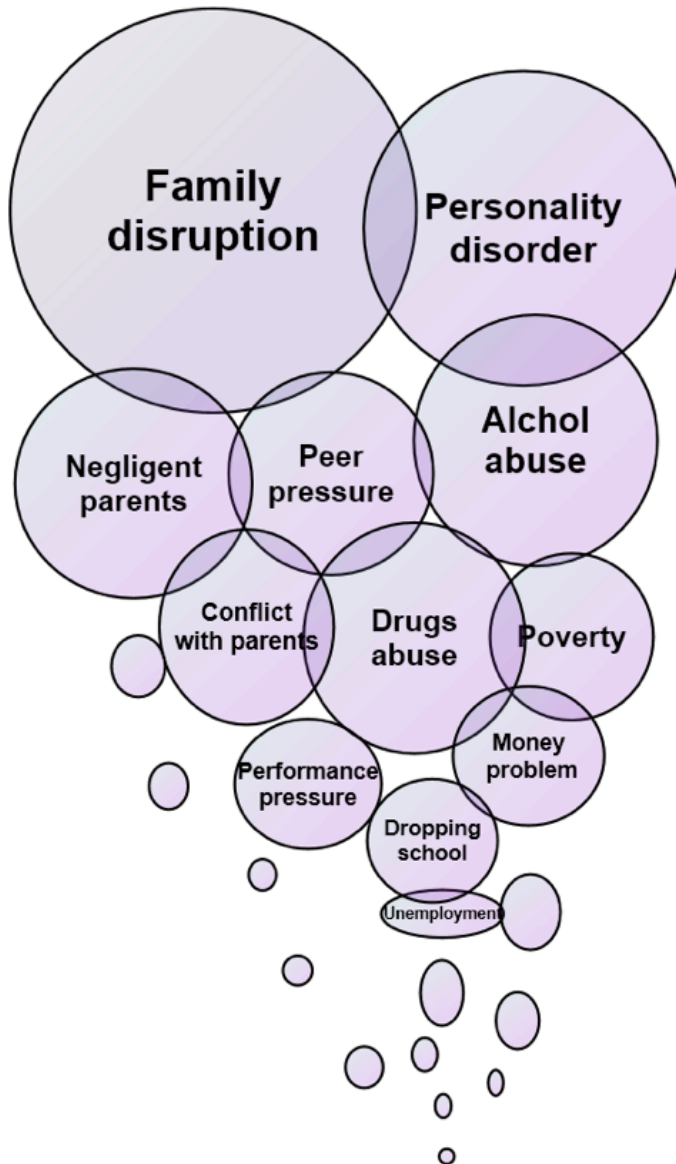
Figure 3.5: Types of crime committed by the participants



Reasons for committing crime

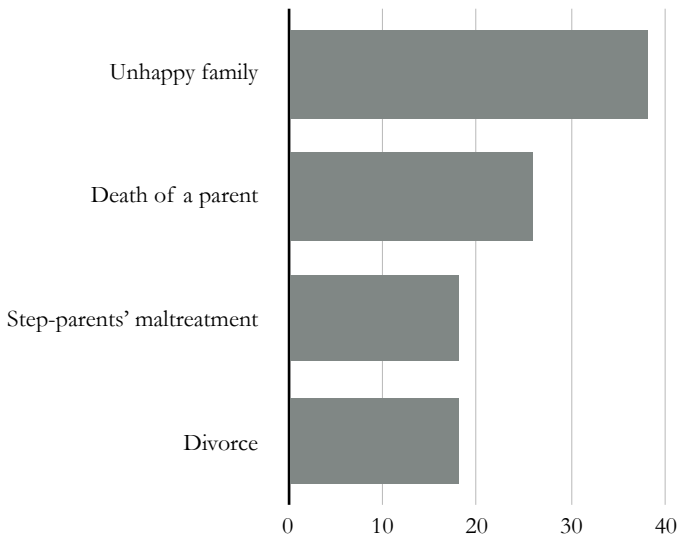
As shown in figure 3.6, the most common reasons cited by the participants for their crimes accorded with the sociological and psychological theories (described earlier). The main reasons they had identified were family disruption, personality disorder, substance abuse (drugs and alcohol), peer pressure, poverty and others. Although, the popular reasons (as accounted by the participants) are shown in bigger circle and placed at the top, all these reasons or factors seem to be inter-related in a very complex way. I found it difficult to draw a single reason for committing a crime.

Figure 3.6: The common reasons for committing crimes given by the participants



characteristics, untimely death of parent(s) or single-parenthood, step-parent's maltreatment, and divorce (shown in figure 3.8). However, I contend that deviancy cannot be limited to broken or dysfunctional families alone; a few participants claimed they had stable families, and yet they had committed crimes.

Figure 3.8: Main features of family disruption



Family dysfunction or breakdown could be further linked to range of problems. We know the family is the basic unit that provide for development of a child's identity, personality, attitude and belief. In the present case, unstable social environment, especially families seemed to have induced the antisocial behaviour among the participants such as drug and alcohol abuse and personality disorders (stress, hopelessness, estrangement, and revengeful attitude), triggering in them deviant behaviour like truancy, poor academic performance, escaping unstable homes (to be with deviant peers or to lead underground lifestyles), and to finally carry out various counter-law activities.

Price & Kunz (2003) had conducted a comprehensive literature review on the causation of delinquency among adolescents and youths. One of their

main conclusions was: 'the family structure is an important factor in explaining delinquency among adolescents and youths'. Young people living in an unstable and dysfunctional families seem to be more at risks of anti-social and deviant behaviour. This was evident from several of the participants' narrations of their difficult childhood period caused by family problems. Some selected excerpts given below serve as the evidences:

"Our overall situation was good when our father and mother were together, but family disintegrated into divorce. There was no wage earner in the family, while I and my brother were still students. After our parents got divorced, we suffered so much [materially and psychologically]. We were always feeling hopeless and unhappy. We were [constantly] facing shortage of money. We [often] did not have enough money to buy rice and vegetables. Out of desperation, I started abusing drugs and alcohol, and soon, I became habituated to shop-lifting and burglary." (XY1, age 17)

"My father used to work at a financial institution. I don't have contact with my father [even now]. He never took care of me after my mother passed away. I think he was being influenced by the stepmother. Our family was once a happy family. When our mother left us, happiness in our lives [abruptly] ended. Our father left us for the stepmother. Since then, I lost hope and resorted to crime. I had to commit burglary just to survive." (XY2, age 24)

"Before being sentenced, I lived in Paro with my friends. I had a very tensed relation with my father. I did not want to live with him. I dropped out of school, and most of the time stayed with my best friend who was then working in an automobile workshop. When living with my mother, I [somehow] got addicted to drugs, after which she too started neglecting me. My friends, though good to me, influenced me to abuse drugs more often than before. All these happened to me due to parental divorce and negligence." (XY3, age 17)

"[I think] my parents were divorced when I was a child of six years old. That was in 1991. This left me feeling sad, lonely, angry, and hopeless. I was not able to adapt in the step family's house; step-parents were not treating me well. They discriminated between me

and their own biological children. My step-father abused me physically several times. I even reacted violently against him [many times]. Not being able to tolerate such harsh treatment, I went to live with my maternal uncle, who sponsored my education. That was how I began to abuse drugs, and slowly, I started committing other crimes.” (XY4, age 24)

“I was frustrated with my life. As an eldest son, I had to look after my younger brother and sister. My parents knew nothing good, but only to drink and quarrel. They hardly bothered about our wellbeing. My family became so dysfunctional; there was no peace in the family. When my parents quarrelled, my father would leave the home and return only after several days. I would also leave the home, not being able to tolerate my mother’s digression of anger on me. I missed many classes simply because I was not able to cope up with the home situation. People in the community looked down upon my family due to never-ending internal conflicts. I always felt my parents were not good to me, so I slowly resorted to crime.” (XY5, age 16)

I interviewed (through email) Lama Zhenphen Zangpo,⁷ one of the recipients of the National Order of Merit Award, 2015 for his role in counselling and helping young substance abusers, addicts and other young Bhutanese people. He attributed youth issues, especially substance abuse, mainly to family disruption:

“Well, I have never done research on the issue, but whenever I talk to youth who are using [drugs], I hear a recurring story: ‘My parents are divorced; my mother or father [got] remarried and my step-father or mother doesn’t care a damn about me’. As I hear this story over and over, I feel that perhaps the family environment is often not strong in Thimphu, and so many youth feel hurt and so don’t want to go home. As a result, they start roaming with friends rather than staying with family, and if the friends are using (and they usually are, as they have a similar stories), then of course they start using drugs. Of course, this is not the reason in every case and some youth who get into drugs have loving parents; they just start using drugs for fun. However, I do

⁷ Lama Zhenphan Zangpo is a Buddhist monk from Wales. He had been counselling Bhutanese youth and substance abusers in Thimphu for almost eight years. Email interviewed on 31st July, 2014.

hear the broken family story very often and so it cannot be dismissed as being [one of the main] contributing factors.” (*Lama Zhenphen, July, 2014*)

In addition, some participants reported that poor household characteristics and economic pressure had forced them to migrate from their rural homes to the towns. The anonymity, social alienation, and difficult economic circumstances they had encountered in the urban areas had forced them to choose antisocial behaviour.

According to Lama Zhenphen Zangpo, young people migrating to urban places face a significant pressure to maintain decent livelihood and when they cannot change their lives for better, they resort to various crimes.

“There is a huge pressure in urban areas to be someone—and that means to have branded clothes and a cool car or a bike. Modern society is losing its respect for people who are simple and hard working (such as a farmer, dish washer or sweeper); and so, there is tremendous pressure to accumulate material things, and that requires money.” (*Lama Zhenphen, July, 2015*)

Personality disorders

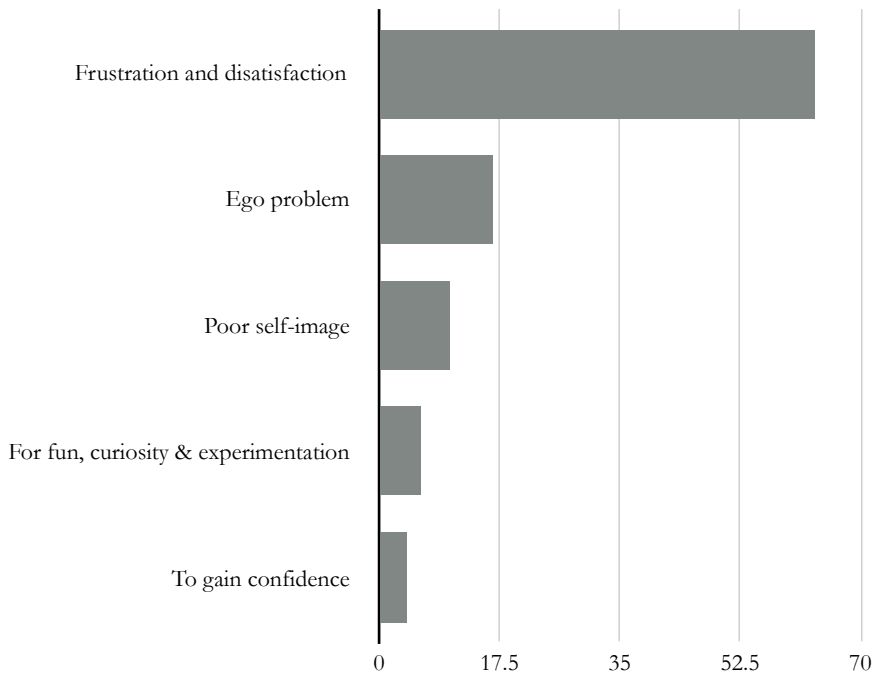
In our traditional belief, explanations of a person’s deviance are often based on superstition and spiritualism or naturalism. We believe that an individual’s criminal tendency is caused by evil forces or when possessed by demons (demonology theory), including a strong believe in the karma and its consequences. Today, after the work of Sigmund Freud (19th-20th Century, the founder of psychoanalysis), who constructed models to explain human personality disorder and deviant behaviour, criminal behaviour are explained more in terms of person’s mental development that takes place at the early phase of personality development.

In the frequency evaluation of the qualitative data, cognitive and personality disorders emerged as the second important reason for crime. Many participants mentioned about the dissatisfaction in life, low-esteem, sadness, depression, angry, guilt, shame, frustration and libido, all of which can be loosely categorised under cognitive and personality disorders. The most common reasons they gave for committing crime were frustration and dissatisfaction in life and negative ego (that normally

drives self-gratification). A few of them accounted fun and excitement as reasons for crimes-a clear manifestation of not being able to differentiate right from wrong. Some of them mentioned that they had to recourse to criminal behaviour to improve their self-image and gain confidence in life (figure 3.9).

Several young convicts talked about low self-esteem. Sometimes, delinquency could be positively associated with inflated self-esteem (Schoen, 1999). Kaplan (1975) mentions in his self-derogation theory that deviance is strongly associated with increase or decrease in young people's self-esteem, sense of belonging, and egotism. Many inmates mentioned that they resorted to crime, mainly physical violence, out of their ego, frustration, anger, and depressive moods.

Figure 3.9: Attributes of personality disorders (as reported by the participants)



Personality disorders again seem to be the sequel of many inter-related factors. The participants talked about low socio-economic condition, family dysfunction, poor performance in life, substance abuse, and other negative social environments. The quotations below illustrate the cases of personality disorders and their multiple causes. Even as we read through those excerpts, we can make out that several inter-related factors have played their roles, especially the family characteristics in inducing in them certain mental conditions.

“I was mentally sick over my life and [difficult] family situation. Being the eldest child, I had a huge responsibility, which I had to bear with great difficulty. I always had the feelings of hopelessness, frustration, dissatisfaction, and often anger over my family’s condition. I wanted to study well, but my family could not provide me adequate school expenses. To console myself, I resorted to drinking alcohol. I lost interest in study and work. I was always mentally disturbed. Slowly, under the influence of my friends, I became addicted to alcohol... I was sentenced for a minor rape.” (XY11, age 16)

“I have committed crime for the first time. The reason for what I am [prisoner] today was my family’s serious economic problem. I had to forge my cousin brother’s signature to withdraw money that I needed to study in a private school. As the eldest brother, I always wanted to study well and help my poor parents, but my economic situation forced me to embezzle money. I was working with my cousin brother [businessman] who would ask me to deposit money at a bank. One day, I forged his signature and withdrew Nu. 120,000 from his bank account. I think I did this under severe mental stress and sense of hopelessness of not having enough money to study further.” (XY9, age 22)

“I tend to lose temper so quickly. I had this problem right from my childhood. This may have to do with my parenting. My father never showed me love; he always used to scold me. I ended up in the prison for having broken the CCTV out of anger and frustration. If I had been able to control my temper, I would not have been here today.” (XY3, age 17)

“To be frank, I was mentally sick before. I was suffering from depression and sense of hopelessness simply for the reason that my

parents were divorced. In addition, my mother was an alcoholic. We had no one to cook for us. I felt depressed over many things and particularly with the way my parents were leading their lives. Sometimes, my friends would even tease about my mother being an alcoholic. This would give me intense feelings of shame and low self-esteem. I would spend most of my time in friends' houses. We did not have enough to eat, forget about having decent school uniforms and clothes. Those things pulled me into the company of bad friends, and slowly, I was drawn into the felonious activities." (XY11, age 19)

"I think my life was so stressful before being sent to the jail [here]. I always used to be lonely and depressed, and often frustrated over the drinking habits of my mother and father. I always liked to be alone and rarely talked with other people. I had low self-esteem, and so, to gain confidence and self-assurance, I started abusing marijuana. It used to make me feel calm and confident even to talk with girls [when in school]. I could not concentrate on my studies; instead, I spent my time watching porn movies, which I could get from the internet and my friends. I ended up with these bad habits due to my family problems." (XY10, age 17)

"I had seven close friends. We were all into drugs. When intoxicated, we would become short-tempered, violent and egoistic. I consider I was mentally not stable. Those days, if I did not take tablets, I would become mentally unsound. I realised I was losing concentration and interest in the works. When drugs were not available, I would become enraged and pick up fight with other people. In this way I got into trouble." (XY7, age 19)

The classical freewill theories of criminal causation seem to apply to some participants. These theories regard deviant behaviour as the result of individual rational choice. The choice usually is to desire for pleasure and avert pain. Some participants in fact indicated they derived fun and pleasure especially when involving in violence and gang fights.

"I used to sell cigarettes and drink alcohol from the age of fourteen. It used to be a great fun. I was imprisoned for three months (2010) for selling cigarettes....In 2012, I was convicted twice under drug case...three years. I was into such unlawful activities due to my attitudinal problem and negative ego. I committed crime out of fun

and to gain confidence. It was meant to boost my ego and show off to people. The main source of stress for me was the parental divorce. My parents neglected me and did not give me proper education. I used to regret and get frustrated when my parents did not give me what I needed. I used to feel low, so I picked up drugs habit.” (XY12, age 22)

“I learnt to smoke when I was fourteen years old. Then, I started to sniff dendrite, and after that abused marijuana. I picked up such bad habits from my cousin brother... When I smoked, I used to feel normal, while sniffing dendrite would make me ‘psycho’. Smoking marijuana used to make me happy and relaxed, but never violent. Marijuana was abundant. I first observed other young people abusing it, and so I also tried after which I got addicted to it. I think I abused illicit substances for fun and excitement.” (XY12, age 22)

The other common reasons for crime that the participants gave point to the presence of some relationships between abuse of alcohol, narcotic drugs and crime, though they were not necessarily the root causes. Studies elsewhere have shown the correlation between substance abuse and criminal behaviour. Most participants admitted that crime took place when they were under the influence of drugs and alcohol. They professed that the abuse of illicit substances gave them range of problems such as poor academic performance, absenteeism, aggression and violence, gang formation and group violence, theft and robbery, and clandestine lifestyles.

“I was a drug addict. I started with marijuana when I was 15 years old. That time, I simply wanted to experiment the feeling of its intoxication, but [regrettably] I got addicted to it. At the age of 19, I began using tablets simply for the reason that my friends were abusing the same. Those days, my parents were running a business. It was easy for me to get drugs. I was caught and arrested twice in the past for sniffing dendrite...Once I decided not to abuse drugs, thinking that it was affecting my parents’ sentiments as well as their business, but I could not quit. I abused drugs to get self-confidence and to feel good. I landed up in the prison after I stabbed a taxi driver. I was under the influence of drugs. That time I was with my friends. We were traveling by a taxi, and on the way, we had gone into a brawl with the taxi

driver. I stabbed him and drove away his taxi. I was excited to drive a car as well.” (XY13, age 21)

“My friends influenced me to abuse drugs. I was a heavy user of narcotic drugs. Obviously, it was under the influence of narcotic drugs that I had committed the crime. Narcotic drugs always made me crazy and insane. Drug addiction brought me many troubles. I was convicted for crime twice. My first crime (2013) was related to drug case, but I was released on bail since I was below 18 years. Second crime was also the drug case...In the third case, I was involved in a murder of third degree felony, liable to imprisonment for nine years. The murder took place when we were playing snooker (two of us, both intoxicated). We had a row with a man (who we did not know), and in the end, my friend stabbed him. I must confess that I did not kill him, but I was charged for aiding the murder. That time, we were under the influence of drugs.” (XY7, age 19)

“I did not have any previous criminal record. I was convicted for murder of second degree felony. It so happened that I was with my friends at Olakha when a murder took place at around 1.30 am. We met an Indian man who agreed to pay our taxi fare and give us some tips if we could make a deal with a woman for him... [Yes] we were drunk and agreed to do the service for him. We went to Olakha to look for a woman in a *drayang*...Because we could not arrange him any woman, he refused to pay us. Being infuriated, I first punched this Indian man, and my friend stabbed him. We robbed his purse. Honestly speaking, we would not have committed the crime had we not been under the influence of drugs and alcohol.” (XY14, age 21)

“My experience with alcohol is regretful. I started drinking heavily after I was forced to discontinue my studies. My drinking habit gave me lot of troubles: firstly, I had a minor accident when driving a government vehicle. Secondly, I would become aggressive [after drinking] and break home items [many times]. And thirdly, I had extra-marital affairs with many women. Once, when drunk, I had sexual relationship with a married woman with two kids. It was a consensual sex, but later she charged me with rape offence.” (XY 15, age 24)

“I think many young people abuse drugs out of frustration with their parents. I used to be mood off when my parents were not willing to buy me what I wanted. I would get irritated when teachers scolded me in the class, especially in front of others. I feel young people indulge in drugs and other crimes, partly because of domestic issues. Many other commit crime because they are unemployed.” (XY13, age 21)

“I committed the crimes under the influence of drugs. I needed money to buy drugs. My father was an alcoholic too. His drinking habit frustrated me. I started using drugs to make him realise that I can do worst than him.” (XY10, aged 17)

Some participants gave poverty as one of the reasons for committing crime. Poor parental characteristics, deprivations and financial pressure seem to have shaped some of their behaviour and caused them to commit crime. Merton's social strain theory emphasises on the availability of goals and means to individuals. This theory contends that acceptable and legitimate means are important to achieve acceptable goals. The acceptable goals and means are decent living, proper education, adequate income, leisure, social status, and so on. When the acceptable means are absent, young people resort to illegitimate means to achieve their personal goals.

Though, there was no sufficient empirical evidence to fully relate the participants' criminal acts to Merton's social strain theory, most participants were from the poor and broken families. There were a few participants belonging to the middle and top class families, but the reasons for crime given by them were different; and mostly were the parental pressure to perform, peer pressure, curiosity to experiment drugs and alcohol, modern youth culture, and experimentation of alternative lifestyle. Those participants coming from the poor families attributed their crimes to low educational achievement, unemployment, economic dependence, poor self-esteem, alcoholism [in the family], and getting easily influenced by the peers.

“Both my parents had passed away when I was a child. I lived with my paralysed sister who could hardly manage to provide me good life... We were very poor family. This situation forced me to commit crime.” (XY16, age 16)

“I had a bad childhood experience, as my family was very poor. Once I wanted to own a bicycle after seeing my friends had bicycles. My parents could not buy it. I started stealing and tried to save money to buy one for myself, but I did not really manage to own it. Sometimes I used to steal food and other items. I got caught for the first time for stealing a DVD and laptop. This offence took place when I was fifteen years old. We did not have a TV at home... I desperately wanted to possess a DVD set.” (XY18, age 18)

“I was frequently getting angry and was in constant conflict with the neighbours for gossiping bad about my family. I now regret having quarrelled with them. I was regretting over my life, mainly for the reason that I was not able to continue my studies. My parents were too poor and could not help me study further. I was feeling neglected. I could not get the things I desired. So, I moved to Thimphu in search of employment hoping to get whatever I desired for, instead I found survival in Thimphu was very difficult. So I had to steal whatever I could from others just to make a living. I was convicted for a series of burglary.” (XY18, age 19)

“Many drug peddler in Thimphu were supplying us narcotic drugs. I think they were into such underground businesses because they were unemployed and did not have proper sources of income. Their customers were mostly young men and women. We would know of secret places where we could meet drug peddler. They would charge us Nu. 150 to 200 for ten tablets, which was not so expensive. Tablets were cheaper and readily available. I do not know how they manage to bring in the drugs from across the border. They did not seem to face difficulty in smuggling the narcotic drugs. I used to steal money to buy drugs, and honestly, I was into drugs due to my poor family situation.” (XY4, age 25)

“I think I was mentally sick over my family’s poor socio-economic condition. During winter vacations, I would prefer to stay with my friends rather than going home [due to poor family situation]. I had to face many problems, coming from the poor family. I started to lose interest in studying. However, I continued and completed my training with great struggle. It was my difficult childhood days that made me alcoholic, which became a part of me and made me a bad person. I was charged for raping my minor girlfriend.” (XY 19, age 24)

Some participants gave 'negligence and poor parenting' as another reason for their criminal behaviour and deviance. Social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) explains that increased social bonds decreases the likelihood of engaging in crime and deviance. Some participants accounted that their weak ties with their parents actually predisposed them into deviant acts. They talked about inadequate families, lack of support from their parents, and hard time socially and economically. These suggest that poor parenting practices and inadequate support had encouraged some of them to become delinquents, especially in their adolescence. Few examples of parental negligence are quoted below:

"I think proper and adequate parental guidance are important for proper child development. Too much of beating [supervision and control] will spoil a child; rather a child must be given love, affection and care. Parents must guide a child when he [or she] gets into wrongdoings. But, [sadly] our parents, in this modern time, are too engaged with their works that they tend to neglect their children. In the end, children resort to unhealthy practices, forcing them to commit the crimes."(XY20, age 16)

"My parents were long divorced, and alcoholics too. They never gave me enough love and care. My friends were better to me than my parents. But, my friends were into narcotic drugs and alcohol. They influenced me to drink and abuse substance. My parents abandoned me, and therefore, my only solaces were to drink and abuse drugs since my young age [adolescence]. I was enrolled as a monk, but I was never happy and had to leave the monastic life" (XY21, age 18)

"I used to feel depressed because my father failed to give me his love and care. My mother was loving and kind to me, but being too poor herself, she could do the least to support me. My father had left us [children] and got remarried with five women, one after another. Had he taken good care of us, I would not have committed any crime and ended up in the prison today. I would have studied well." (XY22, age 16)

"Though my parents were living together, I always found my father too strict. He would beat me for not doing the things that he wanted me to do. Out of fear of being beaten, I would flee from home to be

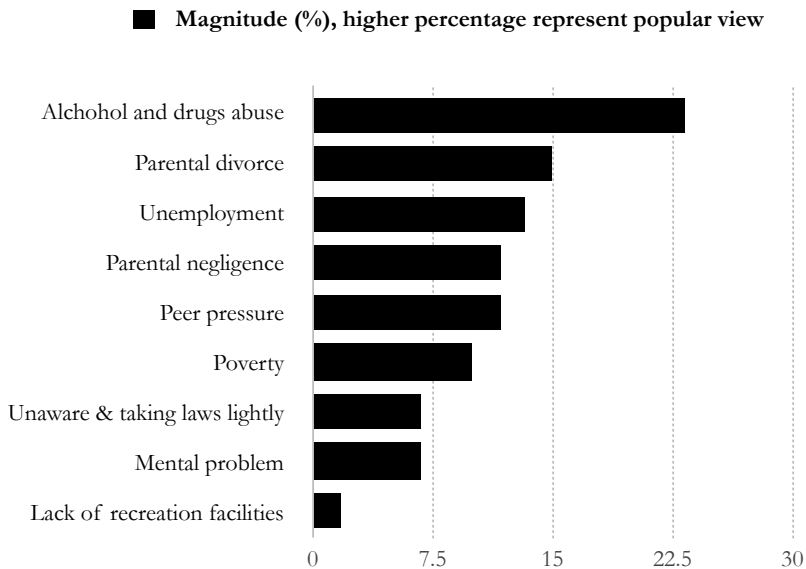
with my friends. Slowly I picked up the habit of drinking.” (XY23, age 16)

“I would say my mother neglected me. Poor father! (sighs) He was a driver. He died a few years ago. My mother was working in a hotel (house keeping). She would drink and have affairs with other men. The family environment was so bad. My mother once even sent my dad to prison. Though my bonds with brother and sister were strong, I always felt being neglected by my mother. I used to be depressed most of the time due to my family situation.” (XY05, age 16)

The participants’ identification of potential crime risk factors for other non-delinquents

Asked about what the participants think would emerge as the major risk factors (other than the ones associated with themselves) for other young people who have not committed crime, the majority of them mentioned alcohol and drug abuse as a top potential risk factor. The other risk factors are presented in figure 3.10.

Figure 3.10: Risk factors for other non-delinquents



The quote below sums up how the participants thought other young non-delinquents may resort to the unlawful activities.

“From my point of view, most young people commit crime and violence after abusing controlled substances and alcohol. They do not realise that the narcotic drugs and alcohol would make them aggressive. Drug abuse leads to other crimes such as violence, robbery and burglary. However, substance abuse [I think] is not the root cause of deviant behaviour among younger age groups. I have seen many young people committing crime due to their family problems. Either their parents are poor, divorced or neglect them. These frustrate them and force them to become the criminals. Unemployment is another main cause of the crime among young people. They move to towns looking for jobs and better social and economic opportunities. When they fail to get a decent job and earning, they loiter in the towns and meet bad friends. They become exposed to the risk of alcohol and drugs abuse. Of course, some children of rich families as well commit crimes. They want to experience abusing drugs and alcohol for fun and excitement, and later, they become the addicts.”(XY4, age 25)

We conducted a pre-study Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving nine drug addicts and abstainers in July, 21 2014. Chithuen Phendey Tshogpa helped us mobilise the participants for this FGD. Several issues were discussed, among which, the FGD participants revealed the presence of not less than 50 drug peddler in Paro alone making it easy to obtain the narcotic drugs. They made it known that some villagers earn money by selling hashish to young people in Thimphu. In the process, they become suppliers of narcotic tablets and other drugs to the rural youths. The participants said that the popular market deal was to exchange hashish (moulded in a camera shape) with samsung mobile phones.

One of them brought to light about the use of heroin and cocaine (supposed to be expensive) by young people belonging to rich families. He was of the opinion that those who become addicted to such costly drugs may squander away their parents’ money and property to acquire these drugs. They said that that the narcotic drugs are smuggled in from Indian border towns (and even from Chinese frontiers) and sold to the Bhutanese people at three times the actual price.

The FGD participants further raised their views that the government's overemphasising on tobacco control and letting the cannabis and other drug business persists [like that] may bring severe implications on the society. They did not mean that the government, or for that matter, the narcotics controlling agencies are not doing anything.

According to them, substance abuse is crime by itself, but more than that, it acts as stimulants for other serious crimes such as getting violent or resorting to other crimes to get money for buying illegal drugs. They revealed that cannabis weeds or bhang are being exported to India illegally, by concealing in the trucks. Cannabis are processed in India and then sold back to Bhutan in different forms: hashish, *chur* and *charas*. In order to tackle the problem of drug abuse, they suggested emphasising more on providing the drugs abusers the rehabilitative services, and to consider imprisoning them as a last resort.

Sense of injustice among the participants (young prisoners)

The participants were then asked about whether they had ever experienced any sense of injustice in the society. Many of them expressed their grievances over the criminal justice system, which was expected as they were the legatees of the justice system. Most of them concurred with the penalties imposed on them saying they deserved the imprisonment. They considered the imprisonment as an important measure to deter and mitigate crime. However, some of them made reference to biases and discrimination in the criminal justice system.

I must clarify here that I stressed more on the participants' views rather than making my own judgement. As a democratic society, their views must be heard, but I leave it to readers' discretion to interpret the participants' views on the presence of injustice in our society.

Figure 3.11 present the overview of sense of justice among the participants, particularly in reference to criminal justice system. About 49% of them who felt some injustice prevails in the society said that the country's laws discriminate between the poor and rich and the powerful and powerless. About 35% of them were not in favour of the current provisions of the rape law, citing it is biased towards girls and women. Sixteen percent of them said the laws are not being strictly enforced.

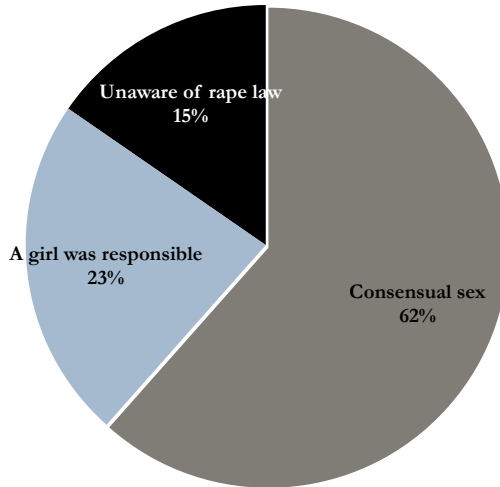
Figure 3.11: Sense of injustice among the participants in reference to criminal justice system



Most participants expressed their discontentment with the statutes dealing with rape or sexual assault. They stated that it was too early to strictly enforce the rape law (at the international standard) in our society, where the cultural mores and customs encourage early sex and marriages. Though they were not absolutely averse to the rape law, they contended that it is biased towards girls or women, reasoning that even if it is a consensual sex, the law penalises a male cohabiter.

Some of them had the view that today's young people are caught up in transition from tradition to modernity, where much needs to be done to educate them about the rape law and its statutes so that the masses can understand and refrain from the offences related to the sexual assault. Some of them maintained that the provisions of such new law should first pervade the society before being stringently applied. Others were of the view that permissible statutory sex and marriageable age should have started with lower age and then raised as more young people become aware of the rape laws and the medical implications of early sexual affairs. Still, others said humanism should prevail rather than the literal application of the rape law. Figure 3.12 presents the summary of how and why participants (convicted for rape) committed the offence.

Figure 3.12: Summary views on how and why rape offences were committed



Some selected views expressed by the participants on the criminal justice system and the laws related to rape are presented below:⁸

“I am not so confident about the laws of the country. The reason why I am saying this is that there is partiality in terms of penalties imposed on the rich and the poor. There is the need to change the way trials are conducted. The sentencing is left to the judge’s discretion, which I think is not fair. The offenders from the rich and powerful families are given less years of sentence even when they have committed murder. Same is the case with the burglary. If a poor person commit burglary, he is given three years of imprisonment, but if some rich children

⁸ The quotes in the subsequent pages (participants’ views about justice in the society and criminal justice system in the country) are presented as narrated to us by young convicts in Changang Central Jail and the YDRC (research participants). I use them [here] believing that the voices of young prisoners must be heard and deliberated in conformity with the rights the Constitution grant every individual the freedom to speak. As a researcher and author, I have no intention of denigrating any authority, individual, law enforcer, judge, and institution. I simply present the opinions of the convicts with the hope that doing so can inform relevant stakeholders and public.

commit the same crime, they are not given an equal sentencing.” (XY2, age 24)

“I feel there is injustice in our society. I was given longer prison years (13 years) than I actually deserved . Some of the inmates with the offence similar to mine got only nine years. Why this difference? I was sentenced for stabbing a taxi driver and driving the taxi away. I feel the judgement depends on the family background. I know a person who was caught with a large quantity of drugs [tablets], but his parents managed to take him out of detention, while some of my friends who were caught with a small quantity of drugs are still serving the prison.” (XY13, age 21)

“I have not personally experienced any injustice, but I feel there are two laws [in our country]: the laws for the rich and the laws for poor people. The rich and poor are treated differently by the laws enforcers. Punishments are meted out depending on the background of offenders. The rich people can just pay the fines and get out of prison no matter how serious their crimes are. This is one area that needs to be looked at [seriously]. If someone can get out of prison like this, then it would encourage more crimes in future.” (XY33, age 22)

“I am not so confident with the way the laws are enforced in our country. Most laws, I believe are not fairly and strictly enforced. The court was not fair to me. My crime was not so serious; I could have been given the bail out. Some of my friends who had committed the third degree felony were given the bail because their parents were rich and powerful. One of my friends involved in the same crime got the bail, whereas I did not. This is unfair. I am still wondering how he got the bail while I did not though we had committed the crime together. The law should not actually differentiate us, but it does.” (XY18, age 19)

“Among all the laws, I see shortcoming in the rape law. It is not fair for the males. I mean it is not gender neutral. Young men are often forced by girls themselves to have sex, and later, they end up in prison. If something is not done, an increasing number of minor girls and their parents will take advantage of this law and imprison many young men. It is high time that we do something with this law, which has become similar to the tobacco sale ban.” (XY4, age 25)

“I am confident about the other laws except for the rape law. It needs to be amended. I get this feeling after listening to the inmates who had been convicted of rape. Their stories made me sad. I think it is genuine that they had consensual sex with minor girls; it seems many of them had not forced the girls into sex, rather, girls themselves seem to have agreed to go for sexual relationships. They are then not the victims. Some of the inmates had been sentenced to nine years just for having sexual affairs with the girls they loved. It is unfair to imprison them for such a long time. The marriageable and sexual age should be lowered, otherwise many young men will end up in prison.” (XY44, age 21)

“It is not necessary that we should follow the international standards; we have our own ways of doing things. In the past and in our traditional society, our forefathers got married at the very early age, most of them at the age of 13 or 14. We have to show some respect to our tradition. Our country is just modernising, but it is not good to adopt international laws and standards at once. We should follow the international norm, but we must set our own standard based on our own contexts. I feel the marriageable age and sexual age should be 15 [initially]. As our people get educated about these laws, then the government could gradually raise the age. For those young people who prefer to go for early sexual relationships and marriages, proper education on safe sex must be given” (XY44, age 21)

“The rape law is in favour of girls or women; they are not charged and punished even when they have big roles in influencing boys to have sexual relationship with them. The males are always considered the offenders and are imprisoned. Boys are most of the time innocent, but our law is such that they are made responsible for the consensual sexual act” (XY99, age 22)

“I was convicted of rape. Actually, I feel it was unfair to send me to the prison. The girl I had sexual relationship was my own girlfriend. She was sixteen and I was twenty years old. We were in relationship and loved each other. We had sex on consensual basis. She was aware of what she was doing. I did not force her to have sex with me. We slept together in a hotel. She was little drunk that time. In spite of being my own girlfriend, she had disclosed about our sexual relationship to her friends, and in the end, the gossip reached the

principal who then reported the case to the police as a rape case. I still feel I was done an injustice ” (XY66, *age 22*)

“I feel the rape law needs to be amended soon. Many inmates are not happy with the law because as we listen to them (convicted of rape), we feel most of them were innocent. We usually have candid discussions among ourselves in the prison [here]. Most of them say they had consensual sexual relationships. I heard about a young man who was released from the prison for being underage. The court had ordered that he should not be allowed to study in any school for three years, but I know he is now studying. Is the law being enforced strictly and uniformly? There was another case in Gelephu in which a police officer had raped a girl. I never heard he was imprisoned. If we are equal before the law, he should be in the prison like us. Something must be done to make everyone equal before the Law.” (XY64, *age 23*)

“There is injustice when it comes to the law enforcement and delivering justice. Even the case like murder and chorten vandalism are given the sentence of 15 years. In my case, for a simple brawl under the influence of drugs, I was given nine years of imprisonment. I think it is biased sentencing. Also, I have committed the crime for the first time, but I was not given a chance to rehabilitate. To be outright, I have no confidence in the way justice is dispensed. I strongly feel the rape law should be amended. It seems some girls’ parents are after money and taking advantage of the rape law. When the accused are trialed, the real facts and nature of the crime should be looked at from both the gender’s perspective rather than outrightly declaring a male as a guilty” (XY77, *age 22*).

“There seems to be some differential treatment of the rich and poor by our laws. I did not realise until I got into the prison. One of my friends, who had committed the crime comes from a rich family. He had committed the crime similar to that of mine, but he was not penalised as much I am being punished (in terms of number or prison years). These day, money can do anything. In general, I am positive about the country’s laws, but there are some laws that needs to be changed such as that of the rape and tobacco. In case of certain rape cases, I feel some innocent young people were convicted and sentenced. They are given more severe sentence than they actually deserve. This is what most of the inmates feel. We often discuss about

it, but there is no one to listen to us. Something has to be done about it so that it does not punish innocent young men. It would be good if some amendment is done on the rape law. Even some husbands are sentenced nine years prison because their wives charged them. Such sentence should be reduced to five years term. The tobacco law [I find] is not consistent; it keeps on changing. For the rule of law to prevail, the laws must be consistent.” (XY64, age 23)

Some participants convicted for abuse of drugs expressed their views about how the society treats druggists, addicts and alcoholics. They felt that society is not benign, forgiving, fair and broad-minded towards young people who are obsessively dependents on drugs and alcohol. The society’s inability to recognise addictions as health problems was something they thought made them feel socially alienated that in turn made them antagonistic to the society, and ultimately influenced them to the criminal acts. They desired for generosity or empathy from the government and society.

“Being a druggist, I felt extreme sense of injustice in our society. Our people do not understand the problems faced by drug addicts and alcoholics. Rather than recognising addiction as a health problem and supporting such people, they report the matter to the police. It would sometimes be good if our people recognise addiction as some type of illness and support the addicts to rehabilitate rather than handing them over to the police” (XY4, age 25)

“Through my own experience, I feel our society is discriminatory towards druggists and alcoholics. Many of us drink or abuse drugs to escape the problems that we cannot solve ourselves. The society should sympathise the addicts because it is not that we want to abuse drugs or alcohol; our own circumstances forced us into such bad habits. In my own community, people talked bad about me for abusing drugs instead of helping me come out of it. Drug addicts and alcoholics like us need the society’s support” (XY89, age 17)

“I feel the society is too harsh to some of our young people. I tried to think good of other people, but they did not like me for abusing drugs. They would always try to ignore me. Druggists are usually ignored and feared by the society. Our people do not realise that drug addiction is one kind of disease and that an addict requires the

society's support. Instead, drug addicts are mistreated, and even sent to prisons." (XY63, age 23)

Some participants felt that the first-time young offenders, who have pleaded guilty to the offence, should be sent to rehabilitative centres instead of giving them custodial sentences. They stated that use of criminal penalties or sentencing to jail for young people should be observed only when the effects of persuasion, advice and warning are not sufficient to prevent young offenders.

"There is the need to look at how our criminal justice system could be improved. I do not mean it is too bad, but I feel that the justice system should give a second chance to those who offend for the first time. For example, the first time drug offenders like me should be given the opportunity to rehabilitate rather than sending them to prisons. Imprisoning people like us at very young age means our lives are gone astray." (XY12, age 22)

"I feel the law is indirectly spoiling the lives of young people. Of course, we should be punished for our own bad actions. We have pleaded guilty and repented our own wrongdoings, but sentencing for more years, three years in my case means that I cannot study. I wish if I were placed in the YDRC where the convicts get chance to study. It should have been 50% of three years and rest bail out so that I could continue my studies. Being in the prison would mean a great loss to myself, my family and the society...For those (young people) who commit crime for the first time, they should be given warning or lighter sentence, instead of prosecuting and sentencing them for longer years. The opportunity cost of imprisoning young people should be carefully evaluated while justice is delivered." (XY80, age 24)

Many of them talked about the presence of spine-chilling setup at the courts. They described about the fear they had to undergo when being escorted into the trial room. Some of them stated that they could not speak out what they actually wanted to, being frightened. These seem to suggest that it is important to think about establishing specialised benches in the courts that are youth-friendly and conducive for them to express their views without any apprehension and nervousness.

“I feel there is some injustice in the society. I am not happy with the criminal justice system. First, the court room itself presents a very petrifying environment, especially for juveniles. When I was taken into the court room, I was very terrified. Second, I was not given much chance to raise my voice. They thought I was the one who had committed the crime, and thus, intimidated and prevailed over me when I tried to speak. Given the chance, I had some more justifications but I could not express myself. I do not want to talk about the court proceedings; it brings in me [very] bad memories. One thing that I remain dissatisfied is that I was not given my right to fully speak out during the trial.” (XY52, age 22)

“If I am given the power to change, I will make the courts and police stations congenial and relaxed for young offenders to express their views without fear and stress, where people in charge can listen with prudence and sympathy to both an accused and victim. They must give equal chance to the accused and victim [to express their views] in order to deliver the right judgement, otherwise some people would suffer for no fault of their own. For example, in the case of rape offence, just saying she is a minor and dispensing justice in her favour itself is the act of injustice. Mine was one such case. I still feel it was not my fault alone. Both I and my girlfriend were equally responsible for early sexual misconduct.” (XY 52, age 22)

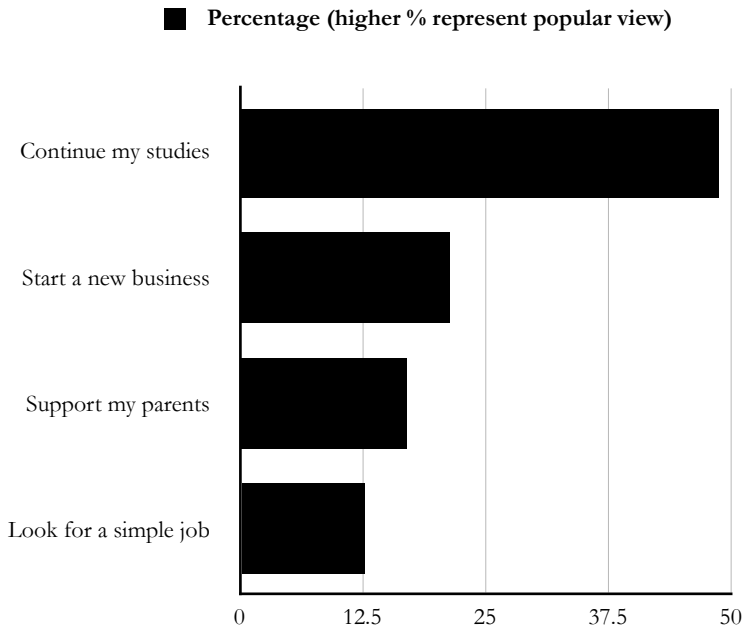
Dreams and aspirations

The participants, in having to fulfil legal liability, seem to have made them realise the damaging effects of their own actions, and to take moral responsibility of their own improprieties. Most of them expressed their repentances over their misconduct. They said they were trying to refine their attitudes, behaviour and actions. No matter whether or not they would be righteous and responsible upon the completion of their prison term and community reentry, almost all of them said they need to change for better. Their greatest fear seem to be whether the society would accept them back and provide them the opportunity to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

The majority of them dreams to continue their studies after completing the prison term or take up the vocational training. Many of them hope to

start businesses of their own, while others want to help their parents or look for a modest employment (figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13: Dreams and aspirations of the participants



Their dreams (of continuing studies) manifest their disposition to reintegrate into the society and strive to conduct well, but they were concerned about whether schools, colleges and vocational institutes within the country would give them the admissions. The RBP has started the Youth Delinquent Monitoring System (YDMS), which records the bio-data of young people coming in conflict with the laws. The guideline preamble of the YDMS states: “The main purpose of the criteria for admission of students shall be strictly based on criminal records and that the measures be put in place to ensure that the students with criminal track records in one college or school or institution do not secure admission in another college or school or institution.” No doubt that the YDMS was established to deter young students from the unlawful activities, but it is likely to decrease motivations of young ex-convicts to

pursue their dreams and aspirations (Stakeholder Meeting, July 17, 2014). Young convicts aspiring to continue studies (after the prison term) are not likely to get admissions to schools and educational institutions within the country until the completion of the ‘cooling-off period’. However, many said they will study in India.

Many participants not only professed repentance over their own actions, but they seemed to have nurtured some sense of empathy for others (that they regret for harming others). They talked about their parents and relatives who they felt had been let down by them. They said they wish to repay their parents’ kindnesses upon being emancipated from the police custody. However, most of them expressed their concerns about how they will fare in the society, given their criminal records, low qualifications, lack of funds to start businesses, and least chances of getting employment. The selected quotes reflect their dreams and aspirations as well as their fears and concerns.

“I have dreams and aspirations. My first dream is to continue my studies and attain the Degree. After that, I wish to support my parents. I think I will be able to get temporary jobs to earn for my college expenses. I want to study in India”(XY 64, age 23)

“After completing my sentence, I want to continue my studies and work hard. But, I am not so sure if I will be granted the police clearance (NOC) in order to get admission to a school. Given the chance, I aim to become an engineer. I feel I can achieve this aim, as I used to be good at studies. It was simply that I ended up in the prison, otherwise, I don’t doubt my intelligence and capability. It all depends on whether the government will give me a second chance in life.” (XY78, age 14)

“I want to continue my studies [after the prison term]. This, I consider as my most important aspiration. But, I wonder if I would be given the admission in the government school. I heard schools in the country refuse admissions to the ex-convicts. This keeps me worrying [all the time]. I know I can complete the studies and achieve my ambition. I am also aware that my parents won’t be able to send me to India [to study]. Whatever it is, I want to try my best if I am given a chance to continue my studies within Bhutan. This is my greatest hope.” (XY80, age 24)

“When I return to the mainstream society, firstly, I wish to apologise to the victim and promise myself not to get involved in any criminal activities. If I am given a chance to study, I would like to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher. I would not wish to return to my village, as my fellow-villagers may look down upon me for my criminal record. I am determined to fulfil my dreams for which I need the support from the government and society. I am not sure whether the required support will be given to me or not”(XY16, *age 16*)

“In the prison [here], we are engaged in learning the art and craft. I think such activities are useful. Since I have missed my formal education, there is nothing much I could do, except to dream of pursuing my interest in art and craft. I wish to take up a course in a vocational training institute. I heard people earn lot of money through profession related to art and craft. The only worry is whether I will be allowed to join any institute of Zorig Chusum. My uncle, mother and brother have promised to help me, anyway.”(XY20, *age 16*)

“I wish to become a driver and work with some construction project. I want to earn and stand on my own feet rather than burdening my parents and relatives. I have burdened them enough for which I always wish to return their kindness. I am indebted to parents and relatives” (XY 52, *age 22 years*)

“When I leave the prison, I would rather prefer to become a monk. I think I have sinned enough, and I want to cleanse myself of these sins. I heard that the greatest sin is killing a human being. I have killed a woman, though accidentally for which I regret day and night. I want to travel to Orissa and join the monastery.”(XY2, *age 24 years*)

There were a few participants who had abandoned hope of doing anything good or productive in life. They seem to bear disquiet about being unproductive after wasting long years in the prison. Some of them said they fear of being ostracised by the society-and thus-have no hope of doing anything worthwhile.

“I dream of becoming a driver. I do not have a bigger dream because a person like me do not have much scope in the society. I am already

a criminal, and the society will shun me. I feel life [itself] is like a dream, so it is better not to dream big.”(XY18, age 19)

“I have a prison term of 21 years, which is too long. I have less hope in my life. I do not think I can do anything productive when I am set free [from the prison]. The only thing I could do is just be a good person. That’s my dream; otherwise I do not have any other aspiration.” (XY52, age 22 years)

“When I complete my imprisonment, I will try to get into film industry as a scrip writer. If I fail to fulfil this dream, I want to try to become a driver in the government service (if the government support me), otherwise I would settle down as a taxi driver. That’s the best I think I can do given my qualification” (XY66, age 22 years).

While the majority of the participants expressed their desires to become good and dutiful individuals, the prison sentences seem to have made a few of them vindictive and revengeful persons, probably because they believed the punishments meted out to them outweighed their offences. They believed that they deserved restorative actions rather than punitive ones; the latter having caused them the loss of their prime age for which they are discontented and wanted to avenge. Unless they are rehabilitated within the prison through benign restorative approach, there are chances of them becoming recidivists.

“Here [in the prison] I am learning many good things like the importance of being good to parents and avoiding bad company. However, I see a few of the inmates not even regretting their own deeds. They seem to be satisfied with what had happened to them and are happy in the prison. They keep on saying that they had been imprisoned for minor crimes, and are often seen fuming over it. They say they would not mind committing bigger crimes [when released] since they had been already typecast as criminals. This is not the correct way of thinking. They do not seem to realise that they are wrong. Something must be done to reform them before they are set free [from the prison].” (XY18, age 19)

Going by the interviews, it seems the prisons are serving as means to reform the criminals, but more needs to be done. Among others, the jail inmates (participants) expressed the need to offer them chance to be

rehabilitated such as schooling or job training so that they can earn a legitimate living when they return to society. Spiritual programmes (choeshey) seem to be useful in teaching ethics and instilling in them the sense of morality.

Life in the prison

I examined the ways in which the participants in both the central jail and the YDRC made meaning of their prison lives. There were mixed responses. Most participants identified detention as a crisis events. Such view was common among those who were first-time offenders. A few others identified confinement in the prison and the YDRC as opportunity to reform. Nevertheless, while they expressed their preferences for rehabilitative detention and less years of sentencing, it appears serving the prison term is a time for self-evaluation and behavioural change. In fact, they expressed that some improvement in the prison facilities and reform services could make their prison years more rewarding and satisfying.

“I got frustrated and sad on knowing that I was being sent to a jail. However, after a few days in jail, I felt bit relaxed. Now I spend my time playing games that makes me forget about my days here in the prison. We have facilities for games, televisions, and programmes to develop our skills in art and crafting [making toys]. I spend most of my time reading books [in the prison]. Of course, we do not get enough good books, but I enjoy reading whatever is there, especially novels. I wish if the prison management could improve the games facility, as games and sports will help us keep active and healthy. They should actually buy more good books on Buddhism and moral development.” (XY12, age 22)

“I was totally depressed when I realised that I was going to a prison. Often, I get stressed of what I will do and where I will go when I complete my prison term. I feel at lost sometimes. When I first came here, I became weak. Now my health has improved [a little]. In fact, my fellow inmates and prison authorities praise me for having improved so much in my conduct. I am trying my best to change myself to a good person.” (XY95, age 22)

“When I was first brought here [prison], I was scared and feeling terrible. I heard many stories, some dreadful—some of the inmates were sentenced for 20 years or lifetime. But here in the prison, we talk and have good time together. Most of the inmates seem to have realised their own misdeeds and are regretting for spoiling their own lives. I want to do well in life and not harm anyone after I am released from the prison. I spend most of my time making toys and decorative, the skill that will benefit me in future” (XY29, age 23)

“A thought of having landed up in the prison drives me mad and wild. More so when I think of my own mistakes. I was free and happy, and these have ended all of a sudden. I am always depressed. By being in the prison, I could learn our national language. I understood the nature of different crimes and the laws. Importantly, I have learnt to respect the elders and the importance of helping other people. These are some positive changes [occurring] in me. There are not much training programmes [in the prison] except sport facilities and spiritual programmes. I gained skills in various games and sports; these things keep me engaged and prevent me from being influenced by bad inmates. I think whatever is being provided by the facility is adequate.” (XY64, age 23)

“What shocks me the most is that I got 21 years sentence, which I feel is the result of unfair court verdict. I feel 21 years is too long; it is end of my life. Anyway, I learn many things in the prison such as painting and art of decoration. I play many games. I do cooking. There is not much work in the prison, so the best way to spend time is to get engaged in these activities. We get health check up every Tuesday. Doctors advise us on health problems. We have library hours from 6 am to 8 pm, which helps use to acquire new knowledge. We have meditation session which is useful to refine our minds. Sometimes, we get to use play stations. Morning exercises keep us fit.” (XY51, age 24)

“I spend my life here being frustrated and depressed. I find it hard to sleep when I think of my aged parents who I could not help in their needy years. I have never seen prison before coming here. I used to feel horrified when I saw people being handcuffed. Knowing that some of our fellow inmates have 22 years prison term upsets me because it is a total loss of their time and a huge cost to the government. I can’t still reconcile with myself being here. However, I

am learning many good aspects of life [here]. I wish if the prison management could introduce more training programmes like training in tailoring, ICT, driving, electronic repair, music class, and importantly, more hours of non-formal education classes and spiritual programmes.” (XY67, age 23)

The participants of the YDRC expressed of having somewhat different experiences. Some of them said it was good that they had been admitted to the rehabilitation centre, otherwise, their lives would have been more difficult, given their hard family circumstances.

“I cried when the police first apprehended me. At the same time, I was hoping that I would not be detained for so long. At first, I was sad and lonely to be here, but now I feel safe and normal. I learnt to play volleyball, which I never knew before coming here. No family member had visited me so far. I got the opportunity to perform on the stage during the YDRC concert. I am always engaged in programmes such as physical exercise and morning PT. These programmes keep me healthy and fit. I think we need more games and sports, especially the soccer facility.”(XY20, age 16)

“After staying here [YDRC] for some months, I have learnt to wake up early, keep myself active and healthy by doing PT. I have realised about the negative effects of alcohol and tobacco. I got an opportunity to participate in the concerts and to continue my studies. I feel happy here since everything is free and full of fun and learning.”(XY89, age 17)

“After being transferred to the YDRC, I got opportunities to continue my studies and to participate in variety of events such as concerts, teacher’s day celebration, losar celebration, and so on. We get the chance to visit temples and engage in PT, games and sports. I feel the counselling programmes have improved my views about life and conduct. I wish if the YDRC could introduce driving and electronic-repair trainings. I suggest introducing more rehabilitation centres throughout the country.” (XY1, age 17)

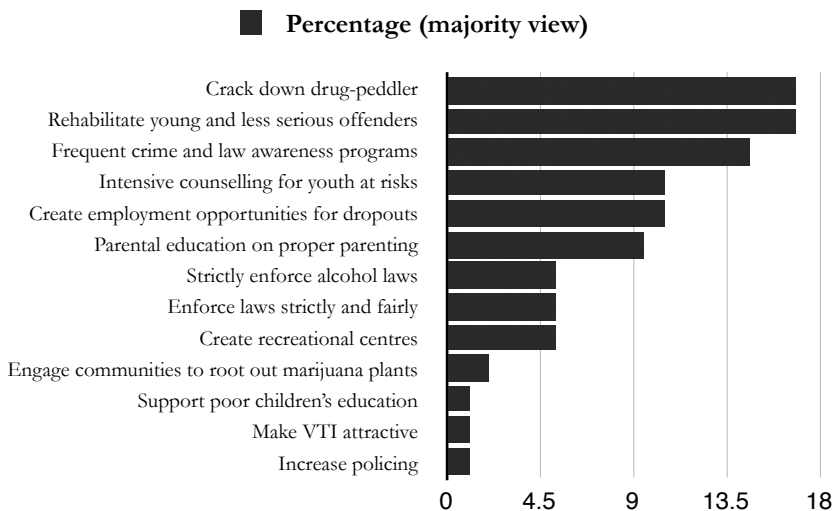
“After coming here [YDRC], I met many friends. I have realised the importance of not harming others, but the need to help others. I got an opportunity to learn how to play guitar. Everyone treats me well. I

respect the Police Officer (OC) like my own mother. She is very kind to all of us. Her presence [with us] makes us feel happy. I have regained my health as I get timely meals. We have many training programs like the NFE programmes, haircutting, carpentry, and painting. We get chance to visit many monasteries, dzongs, and even the Paro [international] airport. Prior to my coming [here], I was confined to a small isolated community where I learnt nothing except to steal and rob.” (XY05, age 16)

What needs to be done to reduce crime among young people?

The participants expressed their opinions about what should be done to prevent crime among young people in the country. Among many suggestions (as shown in figure 3.14): first, the majority of them suggested the need for a series of measures to restrict the expansion of underworld drugs businesses. They outrightly insisted on the urgent need to ‘crack down the drug peddler’. This, they must have asserted, being fully conscious of the fact that abuse of controlled substances was not only the criminal offence by itself, but also the acts that had engendered them to commit penal offences.

Figure 3.14: The participants’ suggestions to prevent and mitigate crime among young people in Bhutan



The following quotes in general represent the views of the participants on how to prevent substance abuse among young people:

“The main issue is easy availability and accessibility of narcotic substances [in our country]. The police and anti-narcotic agents should crack down the drug peddler. Cannabis [plants] are grown wild in most areas. We should frequently involve the community members and others to root out marijuana plants rather than students doing it as episodic educational events. It should be programmed well with enough budget like any other planned programmes. These tasks can be entrusted to the local governments.” (XY4, age 25)

“ A severe penalty should be meted out to the drug peddler. The public must be educated about drugs and alcohol and their consequences. There is the need for a strict enforcement of law such as a tenacious monitoring and inspection of illegal supply of drugs and substance abuse. The drug and tobacco laws should be applied uniformly [to both the poor and rich people]. All the vehicles traveling in from the border towns, irrespective of their makes, should be scrutinised for possible peddling of narcotic substances. I am surprised how drugs are easily available to young people in most towns.” (XY33, age 22)

Second, they talked in favour of the restorative justice for less serious young offenders rather than the punitive actions (such as imprisonment). Of course, they were not against the longer prison term given to those individuals who had made a very serious offences. They proposed the idea of coming up with a concrete policy framework that is more positive and instrumental in making young offenders understand and appreciate the negativities of their own actions such as congenial corrective measures that includes the provision for social, emotional, behavioural and educational needs of young offenders.

They recommended putting in place the preventive measures for other youths at risks of crime. By this, they seem to imply that rather than emphasising on actions to mitigate symptoms, addressing the root causes could culminate into more effective prevention of crime among young people. This study has observed that some of the main causes of crime among young people are generally either absence of, or inadequate social, economic, emotional and educational supports to young people. Unless

these needs are met, both callous corrective and punitive measures such as formal and institutionalised sanctions alone are not likely to prevent or suppress juvenile crime at a desired level.

Our society appears to have dual views on motivations and beliefs in relation to youth justice system. Some Bhutanese citizens blame young people for their wrongdoings and prefer more retributive approaches. For example, many of them continue to affirm corporal punishment in schools and other educational institutions, besides their strong favour for making young people legally liable for their penal offences. Other people believe in the relevancy of welfare-based approaches, in which the state and society takes the responsibility to addressing those conditions such as poor life chances, educational needs, and other welfare support for young people. Amid differing viewpoints on the youth justice system, many participants called for rehabilitative and restorative justice than punitive actions:

“I preferred being given a second chance in life rather than an inconsiderate incarceration. It is unreasonable to send every young person to a prison, especially the first time offenders who have been convicted for misdemeanours. I say it because some of us would have committed petty crimes out of ignorance or sheer carelessness. Instead of imprisoning us, it would have been more befitting to send us to the rehabilitation centres.” (XY80, age 24)

“If I have a power to change something in our system, I would establish as many correctional facilities [as required] so that our young addicts would not have to be admitted in the rehabilitation centres in India. I think we have less number of rehabilitation centres in the country. I wouldn't choose punitive action against drug addicts, but make effort to rehabilitate them, recognising that addiction is a disease [that require restorative approach]. By imprisoning them, there is nothing much they can learn [in the prisons], except gossip, sleep and eat, which is a waste of time. The imprisonment should be the last resort for drug addicts.”(XY4, age 24)

“I suggest establishing rehabilitation centres in every district with adequate amenities; increasing policing at night; and organising frequent awareness programmes against substance abuse, crime and violence. More counselling and rehabilitation programmes for young

people at risks of delinquent behaviour are required to prevent crime and recidivism. I would like to advise other youths to avoid drugs because chances that they will end up in prisons than in rehabilitation centres are more.”(XY90, age 25)

“I suggest the government to create more recreational facilities like games and sports; enforce laws strictly and uniformly, restrict drugs peddling; and reduce the number of bars. Counselling units in schools should be strengthened. The awareness programmes on drugs, alcoholism, crime and violence should be organised as often as possible.” (XY14, age 21)

Regardless of the participants’ standpoints on the kind of actions to be taken against young and petty offenders, it remains to be settled on whether the rehabilitative approach or punitive measures would be desirable. The efficacy of rehabilitative approach is also doubtful given some cases of recidivism among the former protégés of the YDRC. The Tracer Study (Tracer Study, 2013, SCF, RBP and YDF) noted that 14% of 51 YDRC graduates were rearrested. This raises a question of whether there are adequate measures for smooth and effective transition of young offenders back into the society. Teaching young offenders to become morally responsible, self-reliant and compliant through rehabilitation programmes is crucial component of the restorative justice system, but ensuring their smooth transition and reintegration to the society is equally important. Without enabling conditions within the society where they can nurture their responsibilities, the efforts to rehabilitate young offenders may go in vain in some cases.

The third important suggestion was on the need to make young people aware of the various provisions of laws, especially contemporary ones that have direct bearing on the younger generation.

“Young people should be made to understand the various provisions of the law and consequences of breaking the laws through frequent awareness programmes. The media like BBS and Kuensel have important role to play in educating young people on various legislations and about the sanctions for breaking them.” (XY73, age 22)

“To prevent or reduce crime in the country, the police alone cannot make a huge difference. The most important thing is education and awareness programmes. The laws should be enforced strictly and uniformly, particularly those related to drugs and tobacco. Drugs and alcohol should not be readily available to young people, and this can be realised only with the strict vigilance and enforcement of the laws.” (XY64, age 23)

“My view is that government is not doing enough to create awareness about various laws and corresponding penalties. If this is done in coordinated and effective manner, I think the number of young people offending will drop. Such programmes are organised in unsystematic and erratic manner. It seems these programmes are organised as and when there is budget. This ought not be the case, but should be made ‘must happen’ kind of programmes. This is very important.” (XY80, age 24)

“I think the Government and the NGOs need to create more counselling and rehabilitation centres across the country. Rather than those who abuse drugs, [I feel] drugs peddler should be imposed more severe sentences. They are the ones who make drugs easily accessible, and they do it out of their greed and without any consideration that their acts would ruin others’ lives. After having been in the prison for [quite] sometime, I have learnt that many inmates get mental illnesses, especially depression and anxiety [in the prison], and often they [seem to] think of committing more horrendous crimes. Most of them seem to suffer from mental disorders for two reasons: regretting for their actions, and importantly, due to the feelings that they have not been given fair retribution. This means they need more counselling and restorative programmes in the prisons.” (XY13, age 21)

“I would suggest the Government and the NGOs to organise crime awareness educational programs and reduce grouping of young people. The awareness campaigns ‘fight against crime’ will go a long way to reduce crime in the country. Another main issue is an easy availability of drugs. The police and anti-narcotic agents should crack down the drug peddler. The community members should frequently be involved to root out the marijuana plants instead of students doing it. It should be planned activities with enough budgets just like any other government activities. This can be entrusted to the local government.” (XY4, age 24)

The increased mobility of young people from rural to urban centres often dislocate them from their families. Most young people who migrate to the towns end up without jobs. Some of them are even deprived of social safety net (usually present in rural areas) and are left feeling socially alienated. Such unfavourable social and economic situation seems to force them into frivolous pursuits, leading to various crimes. The participants suggested providing such young people the gainful employment to bring them into the loop and prevent them from committing crime. Many of them recommended initiating parental education on proper parenting, while others suggested stringent and nondiscriminatory enforcement of the laws. Further, they recommended consideration [for some of them] to attend vocational and technical training institutes when they leave the prisons and providing them entrepreneurship development training and soft loans to start their own businesses.

Lama Zhenphen Zangpo summed up what needs to be done to help young people and prevent them from crime and antisocial behaviour.

“I think that if schools could inspire youth with following projects, it could have a major positive effect on society: To encourage youth to start relationships later (not as a teen) and to stay in the relationship longer before getting married and having kids. At present, I see a lot of people who, all within the space of 12 to 18 months, start a relationship, get married, have a child and get divorced. As there is huge financial pressure on the divorced parents, it is common for them to remarry in a hurry and so the new partner may not be enthusiastic about becoming a step-mother or step-father. As result, the child misses out on the love and care he or she needs and so is vulnerable to become an addict or get into crime later in life.

Teach dignity of labour by introducing cool and successful people who started life as a dish washer or a sweeper. Unless the youth are willing to take simple, but honest jobs there will always be a lot of youth roaming around and these kids are very vulnerable to get into drugs. Finally, schools can help by introducing fun, but healthy recreational activities to the youth, such as music, art, board games, reading, hiking, etc. Such activities help youth to develop patience and endurance. At present, many youth spend their time playing video games. Although in themselves video games are harmless, they are

similar to drugs and alcohol in that they offer a quick high, but no long term sense of achievement.”(Lam Zhenphen Zangpo, 2015)

Discussion on policy implications and conclusion

Young people represent a large segment of the society with an enormous potential to contribute towards the nation’s success in the future. At the same time, while transitioning to adulthood, many of them stumble across so many challenges and become susceptible of various social afflictions brought about by changing social, cultural and economic contexts. Youth delinquency is on the rise, and it will only get higher unless the most appropriate countermeasures are taken. We are witnessing the crimes among young people such as murder, gang fight, robbery, vandalism, and drug offence. Such rise in criminality among young people may affect the collective good of the society, and disrupt the country’s progress towards creating happy and prosperous society.

It is risky to draw any policy conclusion or prescribe policies based on the simple explorative studies such as the present one. More practical and policy-oriented research needs to be undertaken to arrive at realistic policy recommendations. Our people often surmise that any research should lead to policy recommendations. It is not the case. Some researches are explorative in nature (as this study is), while others are causal, experimental and action-oriented. The last three approaches are more apposite to deduce policies and strategies. Nevertheless, the discussions presented here are suggestive of the various course of actions that we may explore (through further research) and determine their efficacy in crime prevention and control.

The participants’ explicit accounts of their crimes-above all-their motives for offending suggest the need to not only lend listening ears to their concerns, but also to reassess how we manage their real plights.

Notwithstanding the fact that most participants attributed their criminal deviances to substance abuse problem, this seems to be just symptomatic of many other underlying causes. The substance abuse, alcoholism, and criminal deviancy seem to fuel each other in a vicious and destructive manner. Being intoxicated in certain cases have triggered violence and other criminal activities, while in other cases, young people have committed crimes to obtain funds for acquiring illicit substance and

alcohol. The broader implications of this study's findings suggest the need for a conscious and systematic efforts to address the underlying causes of juvenile and youth crime. Identifying diversity of their needs and developing policies and programmes that can accommodate this diversity have become more crucial.

This study illustrates that individual, family specific, and systemic issues interact to induce crime among young people. That is, multiple factors cluster together and act upon each other to generate delinquency. Among many factors, the participants adduced 'family disruption' and 'personality or mental health disorders' to explain their criminal deviances. The narratives eloquently described multiple and interactive causes of these two notable issues: parental negligence, alcoholism problem in the family, parental divorce, poor parenting, loss of parents through death, family discord, negative family and social experiences, chronic poverty, unemployment, serious hardships, education deprivation, poor livelihood, discrimination, destitution, social-stigma, hopelessness and helplessness, loss of self-esteem, anger, frustration, and so on.

Addressing these multiple and interactive factors of juvenile and youth crime may necessitate coordinated and integrated approaches. At present, many government and non-governmental agencies support vulnerable youths, but either their programmes duplicates or there is little systemic coordination among the youth-serving agencies.⁹ In this regard, synergised efforts among them and promoting local responsibility are necessary given that crime prevention, dispensation of justice to young offenders, and their rehabilitation are complex processes.

The primary institution of socialisation that is responsible for instilling in children and young people sense of responsibility, humane conduct, and development of wholesome personality and good citizenship is a family. The qualitative data indicate the presence of some relationships between family disruption and alcoholism, substance abuse and crime. This finding, though not proven statistically significant, may bear some significant implications for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse problems and other crimes among young people.

⁹ This was noted during pre-study design phase (late 2014). We consulted various stakeholders dealing with youth issues. One thing that came out clearly was that many agencies exist to serve youth-at-s of various social ills, but their programmes often duplicates and there is no systemic coordination among them.

The study identified family disruption bearing significant implications for children's adjustment, and as one of the main risk factors for problematic behaviour among young people. Family disruption is loosely characterised by spousal conflict, divorce, broken homes, family alcoholism, negligent parents, parental deviance, poor family bonding, low level of parental involvement, child maltreatment, poor family management practices, and so on, The economic hardships and lack of access to resources and opportunity also seem to have adverse impacts on the functioning of families with negative outcomes for their children like truancy and dropping out of schools, unstructured socialising with deviant peers, alcoholism, drugs abuse, gang formation, and other antisocial behaviour.

As most of the participants had pointed out, family disruption was one of the causes of their anger, frustration, and other negative emotions, which encouraged their indulgence in substance abuse, alcohol consumption, and delinquency. As might be expected, no government and society can guarantee stable family for every child, but it is important that preventing crime among young individuals must include the efforts to counteract the negative effects of family disruption.

In this connection, special attention must be given to young people who have lost their families and are seeking shelters with their friends or relatives. Of course, we do not see many street children, but this doesn't imply that there are no children with plights similar to that of street children in other developing countries. Special programmes are needed to take care of problems related to young people coming from dysfunctional families. The UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for supporting such young people and ensuring their rights: survival rights, protective rights, development rights and participation rights. If the family adjustment initiatives, rescue of troubled young people, and crime prevention measures are undertaken jointly by the agencies with fundamental stake in crime prevention like police, court, youth-serving NGOs, educational institutions, recreational groups, local governments, and others, we might somewhat succeed in our efforts towards prevention and control of crime among young people.

Parents must be made aware of their roles and responsibilities towards their children and on the importance of giving them constant moral guidance and support. In many cases, family breakdown, chronic poverty, and alcoholism problems where young people are in trouble may render

some parents impotent to take responsibility over their children. In other cases, though families may be reasonably rich, uninvolved-parenting practice may deprive their children of proper moral, social and developmental guidance. The participants who came from somewhat well-to-do families described they had suffered from poor and limited emotional connection with their parents, and often took liberties do to whatever they liked.

One thing which the consultative workshop participants (17 June, 2015) felt important was parents' involvement with schools in tackling behavioural problems of their children. Schools seem to use every means to correct the wrongdoers students, but often some parents challenge school discipline decisions instead of getting involved to resolve the problem together. Creating awareness among such parents of their social liability to support, guide, supervise, and monitor their children's activities may be useful for crime prevention and control.

Some participants suggested the need to organise parental awareness programmes on the importance of proper parenting and equip neglectful parents with family management skills. One popular training approach is based on social learning principles and it includes "training parents how to provide positive reinforcement for desirable behaviour, to use non-punitive and consistent discipline practices, and the family crisis management techniques"(Farrington and Welsh 2003:139). Incorporating positive parenting awareness programmes, behaviour management education, family management training, and the programmes that bond parents and children within a larger preventive or intervention framework may contribute towards the crime prevention and control.

In Chapter 3, article 35 of the Child Care and Protection Act, it is mentioned that the government shall endeavour to take measures and develop programmes to provide families with the opportunity to learn about parental roles and obligations towards child care, and in sensitising parents about the problems of children and encouraging their positive roles in the community based activities that might have direct bearing on the positive growth and development of children. However, whether such measures are being undertaken remains to be explored.

Disciplining children may have the desired results, but it is often the case that extreme power-assertiveness or extreme authoritarian parenting

practice may breed tension and parent-child conflict. Children belonging to such families are usually observed to possess high self-confidence and low morale, and less socialising. There were a few cases in our interviews who had reported on how the strict parental disciplining had goaded them to escape their homes and seek shelters with friends or in relatives' homes. Their frequent getaway from their homes (to avoid home violence) placed them in close contacts with the deviant peers. The misconception on the effectiveness of parents' power-assertiveness, especially through the use of physical punishment to correct a child's deviant behaviour may have to be dispelled by means of parenting programmes. This is important given the wider acceptance of corporal punishment among illiterate parents. It would be good to explore the possibility of introducing more special institutions responsible to salvage the neglected and vagrant or runaway children who are at risk of antisocial and criminal behaviour.

Both the police records and this qualitative study shows that most offenders came from the poor families. This suggest that poverty and deprivation have typically complex implications for crime by way of impacting individual's behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal development. The study concludes that poverty and deprivation either directly drove young offenders into criminal acts as means to survive and get out of economic stress or impacted them indirectly by generating other drivers of crime like family instability, abusive conditions at homes, forced premature autonomy, poor up-bringing, low self-esteem, low educational attainment, frustration, anger, drugs abuse, alcoholism, and hardships. The educational attainments of most participants were rather low. They had to apparently drop their studies mainly for the reasons that their families could not afford nominal school expenses.

The most important concepts, therefore, in supporting youth crime prevention are: (1) the identification of poor households with children at risk of engaging in criminal and antisocial behaviour, and (2) provision of social and economic opportunities to vulnerable families with large number of children to overcome poverty.

Most study participants admitted that they possessed some dispositional and environmental strains (prior to their criminal deeds) leading to

various emotional and psychological disturbances. They recounted being angry, depressed, frustrated, hopeless, sensation-seeking, and resentful of their families, communities, and society, which spurred them to externalise behaviour in the form of drugs abuse, alcoholism and delinquency. The imprisonment period represents a timely opportunity to provide them the mental healthcare services. Such services are necessary in the context of the presence of some mental health stigma among the Bhutanese people. It is said that the Bhutanese people with mental problems generally face both internal and social barriers to availing mental healthcare services. The incarceration period may be exploited to treat young convicts with mental disorders and to prepare them for successful family and community re-integration. It was apparent that while the prison inmates appreciated the mental healthcare services available within the prison, many of them called for the improvement of mental healthcare services.

In effect, all of them will one day or other have to return to their families, communities and society. The participants intend to exit from the prison, reformed in every respect. However, there were some sense of fear and disquietude [among them] that they might be compelled to return to the same risky environment and the same old routines, habits, and behaviour that predisposed them to commit the previous crimes. The life's trajectories for them seemed less predictable. Currently, no satisfactory programme exists to facilitate the prisoners' reentry into their families and communities with some measures of self-worth. No traditional social agency exists to facilitate the prison-community transition, and thus, creating new agencies committed to help prison leavers readjust with their families and communities holds great promises of preventing or reducing recidivism.

Against this backdrop, the comprehensive reentry support programmes are crucial for the prison leavers. Their wishes and aspirations must be given full consideration, exceptionally in providing them access to the services that can refine and enhance their livelihood. For example, a young ex-convict, who had acquired some vocational skill and aptitude in the prison may wish to attend the formal vocational course. In such cases, he may be given an admission to the vocational institute not on the basis of his educational qualification, but by judging his skills, aptitude and competence. Such consideration is justifiable because, firstly, the number of such cases may be small and manageable, and secondly, the cost to

society of denying them such opportunities may become substantial in case they fall back and resort to antisocial behaviour.

Most participants professed that their crimes occurred under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Abuse of gangza (cannabis sativa) and chang (traditional liquor) seems to be common in schools and other learning institutions and among those who are jobless and idle. It was apparent that marijuana serve as 'gateway or rite of passage' to abuse of other dangerous drugs and a warning signs of criminal behaviour. It is unfortunate that gangza are grown in abundance in wild making it easily accessible to school children and young people. The commercial narcotic drugs are also easy to obtain in towns, smuggled in from the border areas.

Some schools and volunteers periodically organises campaigns to root out cannabis plants. Though such programmes are beneficial, they are irregular and sustainability remains an issue. Having a long-term plan and well-coordinated programmes to eradicate wild cannabis sativa plants from places near towns, schools and those places easily accessible to young people deserves high consideration. During the stakeholders workshop (17th June 2015), many participants suggested setting up local level committees representing different agencies and partners: local government leaders, health staff, schools, forest staff, community members, and representatives from NGOs to control widespread growth of cannabis plants. The workshop participants agreed on the need to incorporate cannabis eradication programme into the local development plan with regular budget. The programmes, according to them, must involve local communities schools, volunteers, monks, local government staff, and so on.

Another aspect of the drug control is the easy availability and accessibility to commercial narcotic drugs. The stakeholder workshop's participants suggested the need to intensify vigilance on illegal cross-border drug smuggling and tough actions on drug lords and their traffickers. The RBP and Bhutan Narcotic Control Authority (BNCA) are doing their best, but there seems to be the need to toughen the effort to curb drug smuggling. Some of the workshop participants

suggested using detection or sniffer dogs at critical checkpoints and for drug raids. They were of the view that having drug dogs placed at the major checkpoints can act as a strong deterrent to drug smugglers. Of course, using sniffer dogs may create intimidating atmosphere for general motorists, but in the best interest of young people and others, the country has significant obligation to provide the law enforcement agencies the tools to combat drug trafficking. Moreover, a canine sniff does not require opening the luggage, and thus, is less intrusive than the normal search.

The way the study participants described how they had committed crime showed that most of the offences were committed in groups. Criminal activities among young people in peer groups were higher for theft, robbery, substance abuse, assault, etc and lower for murder and grievous crimes. We know and must appreciate that the RBP have been able to amicably crack down on gang formation in the recent years, but not much can be done to intervene when young people are seen around in a group appearing so normal, though they may be up for some nuisance. Providing guidance and counselling services in schools may be one best measure to counter the negative effects of peer pressure.

Delinquent behaviour often occurs in social settings where norms for acceptable behaviour have disintegrated. In the past, it was safer and secure to keep houses unlocked; no one had to worry about the theft and burglary. Today, even when the doors are secured, theft and burglary are common. These offences have become more serious in urban areas. In urban areas, growing consumerism and consumer standards created by media have gone beyond the means of what parents could provide to their children or what young people, loitering in towns, could achieve. Such new ideals (being able to wear fashion clothes, attend parties, or possess latest smartphones, etc) have become virtual reality for many young people. Many urban young people go to that extent of using criminal activities to maintain lifestyle that they cannot afford. This happens when contradiction arise between idealised and socially approved goals and when there are limited real-life opportunities for young people to achieve idealised goals through legal means.

It is apparent that there is a fast shift in lifestyles and degradation of social control the community members exert on young people who resort

to unacceptable behaviour and criminal activities. This is an indication of growing complacency among the community members and decline of social cohesion. The RBP has initiated several programmes in partnership with parents, schools, colleges, and communities to prevent and control crime among young people. The recent efforts to curb crimes in urban areas through community policing and police-youth partnership are commendable, and more such efforts are likely to have positive effects on the crime prevention.

The disconnect between young people and adult member of the communities appear to be widening. It is possible that positive energy can be generated if the initiatives are taken to encourage young people to work in partnership with adults in improving conditions in their own communities. Young people's engagement in voluntary activities, generating new ideas, and in decision-making along with adult members may yield promising results.

The community members, both in urban and rural areas, need to be made aware of their roles in preventing youth crime and the importance of partnering with the law enforcers. At present, most community members are complacent even when serious crimes take place in their localities. Many shun from positively intervening because they fear they would be unnecessarily implicated or trapped in the criminal investigation procedures, and thus, they do not bother to inform police even when the crimes are taking place right in front of their eyes and even though the law treats non-reporting of crime as an offence. Dispelling such complacency or 'none of my business attitude' among the community members remains an important issue.

Youth unemployment can be the consequence of so many interacting factors. The education system is often alleged to be responsible for rural-urban migration of young people and their unemployment or underemployment situation. In this context, the education policy that influences school curriculum needs to consider diversity in young people's ability, preference, priority, and labour market demands. Not every young person may need an education that prepares them for university or some higher education and white collar jobs. Some of them could be nurtured as erudite farmers, entrepreneurs, technicians, artisans, and so on, so that the social issues associated with the youth

unemployment, including juvenile and youth crime do not emerge as significant concerns.

While providing employment is included within the overall framework of crime prevention and control, mere presence of jobs may not suffice. In this case, providing gainful and quality employment may matter much. Among the research participants, about 33% were employed indicating the case in point. The labour market needs to be restructured to create more employment opportunities for young people. At present, unemployment and underemployment among young people, especially school dropouts are becoming the challenges. This can be largely due to rural-urban migration of young people and over crowding in urban neighbourhoods. Young people must also be taught to accept any kind of professions rather than simply yearn for white-collar or non-menial jobs. Of course, many of them do accept menial jobs for survival, but lack of opportunity to move upward dispirit them. For example, as Lama Zhenphen Zangpo stated, young persons who work as dish washers, kitchen helpers, waiters or salespersons, hardly get other training instead their low-paid jobs often entail them working from morning until night.

Television programmes and movies seem to popularise violence and sexual urges among young people. For example, a few participants did mention about their inclination to imitate 'heroes' in the movies who usually emerges as victorious through the physical elimination of enemies. As described by one of the participants (convicts), porn movies seem to be easily accessible to children through illegal sale and online download. He said he was so habituated to watching porn movies from as early as age of 12 that actually motivated him to rape a neighbour's girl child.

Contemporary generations of the Bhutanese youth have started to create a new public space for themselves in cyberspace through the internet and social media. New technologies allow young people to modify their identities and to create new and multiple virtual identities. In such case, it is crucial for parents to exert strong parental control and monitoring of what their children are watching on televisions and doing on their phones or cyberspace social networks. In the larger context, creating a wide range of recreational facilities and services of interest to young people and making them easily accessible to them might divert their attention away from pernicious television programmes and violent and salacious movies

and internet. School dropouts need to be engaged in learning and productive activities, but there seem to be a challenge in making youth development programmes attractive to them.

A representative from the YDF pointed out (during the consultative stakeholder workshop held on June 17, 2015) that they organise a program called Harmony Youth Volunteers Programme, involving about 800 students. More than 16-17 programmes are organised every winter vacation. The main issue is difficulty in recruiting school dropouts for the youth development programmes. It is likely that the dropouts are firstly not aware of the out-of-school programmes; and secondly, designed for students, these programmes may not be diverse to cater for them to enhance their employment prospects. The programmes may have to be diversified to cater to diverse needs of different dropouts (differences in interests and education levels). Perhaps, a study on why school dropouts do not participate in the YDF's multiple youth development programmes is crucial.

The arrests and sentencing are likely to deter offending behaviour because it makes young offenders understand the undesirable consequences on themselves and their families. The participants of this study have expressed repentances over their own criminal deeds and were inclined to reform and expressed their wishes for releasing them on parole or probation. In addition, most of them despised the severity, bias, and inconsistency of legal sanctions that left a few of them vengeful and inclined to reoffending. Most participants insisted on the need for fair and consistent punishment regardless of individual background and circumstances. There was some sense of injustice among them with regard to penal sentences imposed on them.

A dominant view among the participants was that they should not have been sentenced for longer duration and make them squander their prime years in the prisons rather than preparing them for productive citizenships. They justified this saying they had infringed the criminal laws on account of being immature, ignorant, and failure to differentiate between criminal and socially acceptable acts and simply being mischievous. Many of them asserted that they gradually started to realise what is good or bad for themselves, their families, and the society only after being held up in the prisons.

Going by their viewpoints, putting young people behind the bars for the offences of trivial nature may not deal with the kind of factors responsible for their crimes. It then becomes, according to them, the mere act of removing them from crime situation, but not showing them that they could become morally responsible and good citizens. Their views reflected preference for restorative justice over punitive justice, and affirmed the value of rehabilitation. The restorative justice is defined as “a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offence and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible’ (Zehr (1990; as cited in Bessemer, G. and Umbreit, M., 1997).

The concept and practice of diversion stated in the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice or the Beijing Rules (Resolution 40/33, 29 November 1985) prescribe the following: collective measures (family, volunteers, schools and community institutions) and humanely handling of young offenders using minimum intervention of law; the use of diversion to deal with young and juvenile offenders without resorting to formal court trial wherever appropriate; detention for the shortest time possible and separate from adult detention to be used as last resort only when diversion is not appropriate, and so on. The Beijing Rules reflects the need for the society to salvage young offenders at an age when it is possible to reform them rather than breeding in them tendencies of developing criminal career.

As the study participants maintained, while serious offenders deserve severe punishment, perpetrators of less serious crimes and the first time offenders should be treated humanely, decriminalised, and diverted from the prisons to the rehabilitation or correctional centres and observation homes if they are able to demonstrate promises for reform, social and moral righteousness, and good conduct. If the country opt to emphasise on restorative justice for young offenders, it may entail establishing more rehabilitation centres across the country. Lama Zhenphen Zangpo also concluded : “our youth are not at all bad and with some good guidance and care, the vast majority can get back in track” (email interview: 30th July, 2014) indicating the importance of rehabilitative programmes. I am of the opinion that there should be an equal emphasis on both punishment and reformation.

Currently, the only rehabilitation centre for young offenders is managed by the RBP, which do not fully decriminalise young offender recruits. Experiences in other countries show that rehabilitation activities are normally carried out by the government agencies, NGOs and local communities. For example, in the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development through the Local Social Welfare Officers manages the community-based treatment system.

Some participants had highlighted their experiences of being nervous, scared, and dumbstruck during the court hearings. This suggest the need to asses the current trend in directing young perpetrators to conventional courts. A few of them complained of police antagonising them and foisting cases on them. Introducing special court procedures, that recognise the immaturity of juvenile offenders and ensure fair and uninhibited hearings may enhance dispensation of fair, consistent, and uniform justice. Legal services aid for young offenders may have positive implications on infallible juvenile court procedures.

Special legal status of the minor offenders was the recent advent, and this came about with the inception of the Penal Code of Bhutan (2002). The Penal Code legitimised a special status for children and youthful lawbreakers. In order to exercise such rights and legitimacy vouchsafed to them, it is high time that specialised and youth-friendly benches are set up across the courts at different levels. Undoubtedly, upsurges in crime among young people will only increase the pressure to reorganise and consider the need for youth courts. Further, providing training on psychology of children and youth justice, and related procedures for judges and police has become imperative.

Our effort to create an egalitarian society, where everyone is treated equally before the law is often perplexed by certain legislations. The most talked about law that the study participants were not contented with is the rape law. The participants felt there is the need to amend this law so that it does not discriminate male and female. When rape takes place and are reported to the law enforcers, no matter who are culpable to offence or even when sexual acts are consensual, it is always the males who gets convicted.

In the opinion of participants, rather than formulating such law on the basis of ideas bought in from other countries, there should be adequate

contextualising of it to our own country's long established belief, customs and practices. The matter of the fact is that our society preferred early marriages (such as *chung-nyen*, *jomo ngengi* marriage tradition of Merak-Sakteng, and *grendheme* marriage tradition of lower Kheng) not long ago. Though these traditions may no longer be relevant and sensible in today's changing contexts, our older generation had preferred early marriages (to reproduce as early as possible) to meet the manpower need for the farms. These custom and tradition are in decline, but not completely wiped out, and they may be influencing (to a certain extent) how young people view sexuality.

Some young rape convicts had knowledge about the rape law, but they had not taken it seriously and did not expect severe penal retribution. It would have been rational to first educate society about the rape law and legal liability for breaching it. As the society got educated about it, the enforcement could have been made stringent incrementally. For example, having set the statutory age limit for sex could have been set low in the beginning (instead of 18 years) and increased gradually when people got more informed and begin to understand that sexual act with underage females is morally reprehensible and legally punishable. This would have prevented many young people from being incarcerated.

Preventing and mitigating crime among young people require accurate identification of the risk factors that increase the probability of delinquent behaviour and the protective factors that prevents antisocial behaviour among young people. Though the current study identifies those risk factors in limited way, it was based on the experiences of subsample of young offenders. The result of this study cannot be generalised, but may inform future research. There is then the need to conduct many action researches to understand the causes and correlates of delinquency. In fact, no adequate programme can be formulated without sound knowledge and facts about young people at risk of deviant behaviour, their problems, and social influences on them. Relying on the RBP crime records or some other administrative data to inform policy and programme designs can often be ambiguous due to underreporting of the crimes. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to undertake nationally representative crime and victimisation surveys for understanding crime among young people and in designing effective interventions.

Finally, the challenge for the Government is to identify the issues faced by young people (especially their causes) and to create policy, which is well targeted and appropriate. While the interventionist and punitive approaches are necessary to prevent crime among younger generation, it is important to develop policies and programmes which identify root causes and address the diverse challenges of young people and support them to reach their maximum potential through integrated approach and in sustainable manner.

References

Kaplan, H.B., Smith, P.B., & Pokorny, A.D (1979). Psychosocial antecedents of unwed motherhood among indigent adolescent. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 8, 181-207.

McLearn, K.T., Colasanto,D., Schoen,C, & Shapiro, M.Y. (1999). Mentoring matters: A national Survey of adults mentoring og young people. In J.B Grossman (Ed.), *contemporary issues in mentoring* (pp. 66-83). Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

Price, C., & Kunz, J. (2003). Rethinking the paradigm of juvenile delinquency as related to divorce. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 3, 109-133.

Schoen. (1999) The etiology of violence and the voice of the perpetrator. *Dissertation Abstracts International B: Science and Engineering*, 60(2-B), 0875.

UN (1985). United Nation's Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice or the Beijing Rules (Resolution 40/33, 29 November 1985).

SCF, YDF & RBP (2013). *Tracer Study on Children in conflict with law*, Thimphu.

Zehr, H., & Umbrelt, M. (1982). Victim offender reconciliation: an incarceration substitute? *Federal Probation* 46 (4), 63-68.

Zehr, H. (1990). *Changing Lenses: A Focus for Crime and Justice*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

CHAPTER IV: AN ASSESSMENT OF MENTAL DISORDERS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE USING HOSPITAL RECORDS

Cheda Jamtsho¹⁰

‘Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Introduction

The initiatives to improve the health and wellness of the Bhutanese people have been widely recognised. Early intervention included the establishment of the Bhutan Mental Health Programme to document and treat mental disorders, training of general practitioners to recognise mental illness, volunteer overseas medical professionals and telemedicine (Nirola, 2010). A major thrust of the effort to protect and develop positive mental health is on the young people of Bhutan. This is because young people constitute about 35% of the country’s population (Office of the Census Commissioner 2005). Patel et al. (2007) has concluded that adolescence and youth are the critical stage for mental development, which is also the stage at which most mental disorders begin.

Defining the categories of young people has been the subject of debate because cultural variation makes categorisation of age groups more or less contextual. We have attempted to be consistent with our definition of young people because of the fluidity of the term. Considering the leverage of context-based definition, this study uses the definition from Dorji L. (2015) in order to maintain the consistency of the definition throughout the report. He considers adolescent in the age range 10-19, and youth in the age range 20-24. This modification was made so that the age range between adolescents (10-19) and youth (15-24) as defined by UNFPA do not overlap. However, importantly, he uses young person as someone in the age range of 10-24 years.

¹⁰ Research Officer with the Socio-Economic Research and Analysis Division, NSB. For any further clarification, you may write to him at cheda.nsb@gmail.com.

Positive development of young people's mental health, in addition to physical health, is important to attain overall wellness and happiness. Common mental disorders identified in Bhutan are those that broadly includes 'alterations in thinking, mood, or behaviour associated with distress and/or impaired functioning'(Canadian Mental Health Association). Obviously, these conditions are not unique, rather, it is interesting to note that one in four people in the world will be affected by mental disorders at some point in their lives (WHO 2010). However, the promotion of individual health and happiness and maximising Gross National Happiness (GNH) must include a more complete understanding of mental health status of the Bhutanese population.

Studies have revealed strong relationships between mental disorders and other health issues, community problems and development concerns for young people, especially educational achievements (McLeod, Uemura and Rohrman 2012; Joe, Joe and Rowley 2009), substance use and abuse; crime (Cuellar, McReynolds and Wasserman 2006, Monahan and Steadman 1983), violence (Robbins, Monahan and Silver 2003), and reproductive and sexual health. Consequently, mental health has a significant effects on development of young people and their social and economic integration into the society.

Incidences of mental disorder may be occurring less frequently in Bhutan than in other countries. However, there is evidence that mental illnesses are observed and treated in the country (Dorji, C, 2005). One major concern is that there exists only a few studies (Dorji, C, 2004; Nirola 2010; Pelzang 2012) on mental health in Bhutan. Mental health disorders draws little public attention in our case than those that are related to physical health.

The fact that mental and behavioural disorders transcends all social, cultural, and economic settings makes our society neither an exception nor immune to mental disorders. Therefore, investigation into the prevalence of mental health of our people and understanding the nature of many different mental ailments are important for designing effective policy interventions.

The primary aim of the present study is to explore the prevalence and trend of mental disorders among young populace. Due to data constraint, the assessment of associative and causal relationships between mental

disorders and social, ecological, cultural, and economic factors is not possible at present. The remaining part of the paper describes the data and methodology and presents the results in terms of yearly trend, comparison of mental disorders by sex and age group. The paper concludes with discussion and policy implications.

Data and method

The data for the present analysis was sourced from the administrative records maintained by the Out Patient Department (OPD), Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital (JDWRH), Thimphu. The period covered was 14 years (2000 to 2014). The OPD records for 'diagnoses and symptoms' were maintained using International Classification of Disease (ICD-10) codes. This made analysis bit easier. The ICD-10 classifications is the WHO's system of coding diagnoses and symptoms.

The database contained additional information such as a patient's age, sex, occupation, birthplace and current residence. Due to missing information, only age, sex, and diagnosis variables could be fully used for the analysis. Some missing values were generated while cross tabulating the variables, thereby making the total tally less than the actual cases. For instance, the total number of cases (young people who sought mental health services) was 2,083, but when cross tabulating the variables, the number of cases came down to 2,052. There were 31 cases without diagnosis. Such data inconsistencies and missing values are pointed out in the analysis wherever necessary. Such data problems are usually present in the administrative data particularly when recordings are done erratically or casually. Since the data was sourced from the administrative records, the maximum we could do was simple, descriptive and explorative analysis.

RESULTS

Patients with mental disorders by sex and age group, 2000-2014

The period of adolescence and youth is generally considered a healthy stage of life. It is also at this stage that young people, especially among those transiting into adulthood that mental and behavioural disorders are manifested.

The data revealed that overall, a total of 6,297 people who suffered some kind of mental disorders visited the OPD, JDWNRH between 2000 and 2014. Out of this, 6,242 outpatients had reported their age. Table 4.1 shows that 3,917 outpatients were people aged 25-64; young people within the age range of 10-24 constituted 33% of the total mental health outpatients, where adolescents (10-19) and youths (20-24) were almost equally distributed. Children (below 10 years) and old people (above 65 years) constituted less than 5%. Males and females were represented almost equally. Half of the outpatients were younger than age 29.

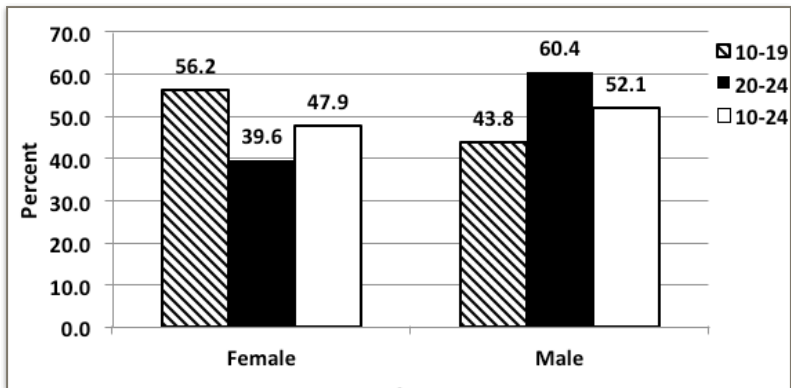
Table 4.1 Patients with mental disorders by 2000-2014

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Sex*		
Male	3,270	51.86
Female	3,027	48.14
Age group**		
Below 10	66	1.60
10-24	2,083	33.37
25-64	3,917	62.75
65 +	176	2.82
Young people (age 10-24)		
10-19	1,033	49.59
20-24	1,050	50.41
Median age**	29	

*Note: *N=6,297 **N=6,242 ,*

Among young people, as shown in Figure 4.1, 52% of the outpatients were young males and about 48% young females. On the contrary, about 60% of the youth (20-24) with reported mental illnesses were males; 44% were adolescents (10-19).

Figure 4. 1: Percentage of patients with mental disorders by age and sex



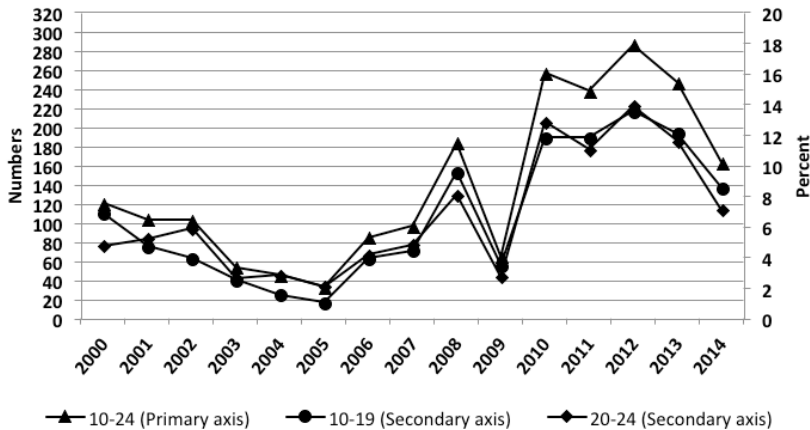
Young people (10-24): Adolescents and youth

Yearly trends of young people with mental disorders, 2000-2014

Number of young people with reported mental disorders as recorded in OPD, JDWNRH, has changed over the last one and half decades. Figure 4.2 shows a dramatic fluctuation in number of outpatients with mental disorders. Men and women were represented almost in equal proportion in all the years except some differences in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2008, and 2014. Overall, the number of outpatients declined from 121 (5.8% of the total number included in this study) in 2000 to 54 (2.6%) in 2003 reaching a low of 33 (1.6%) outpatients in 2003, and then slightly increased to 85 (4.1%) in 2006. From 2007 to 2010, a dramatic rise and fall in the number of outpatients were observed. This similar pattern was replicated for both males and females. The highest level was reached in 2012 when 286 (13.7%) outpatients were recorded, but it declined significantly thereafter over recent years. In 2014 a total of 163 (7.8%) outpatients were recorded, down from 247 (11.9%) in the previous year.

For all age groups, alcohol related mental disorders have risen to over 100 beginning 2010. Similar trend was observed for those in the age group 20-24. The alcohol related mental illnesses seem to be predominant among the outpatients in the age group 25-35 (data not shown).

Figure 4.2: Yearly trend of patients with mental disorders by age group



Prevalence of mental disorders, 2000-2014

Prevalent in most societies, ‘depression’ is a serious mood disorder that can cause persistent feeling of sadness, loss of interest and enjoyment, and reduced vigour leading to increased fatigability and diminished activity. For instance, people suffering from depression may feel that life is not worth living, and may have trouble in doing daily activities even like household chores, affecting work productivity. Dorji, C (2004) maintained that the other common disorders that are of great concerns are narcotic drugs and alcohol abuse, schizophrenia, epilepsy, mental retardation, Alzheimer’s disease, and mental disorders of childhood and adolescents. He further explained that though epilepsy is a neurological disorder, it was historically seen as mental disorder, which is still considered so in many societies. The reason was that people with epilepsy suffer stigma and severe disability like other mental disorders. Summary of young people’s mental conditions by disaggregated by sex is given in table 4.2

Table 4.2: Types of mental disorders by sex groups

Types of mental disorders	Male	Female	Total Percent
Mental &behavioural disorder due to alcohol use	699 (21.7)	164 (5.5)	864 (13.9)
Mental &behavioural disorder (drug use)	200 (6.2)	19 (0.6)	219 (3.5)
Schizophrenia	85 (2.6)	65 (2.2)	150 (2.4)
Bipolar affective disorder	69 (2.1)	82 (2.7)	151 (2.43)
Depression	571 (17.7)	734 (24.6)	1,305 (21.0)
Anxiety disorder	523 (16.2)	657 (22.0)	1,180 (19.0)
Stress, and adjustment disorders	71 (2.2)	103 (3.5)	174 (2.8)
Dissociative disorder	62 (1.9)	137 (4.6)	199 (3.2)
Somatoform disorders	144 (4.5)	253 (8.5)	397 (6.4)
Epilepsy	605 (18.8)	576 (19.3)	1,181 (19.0)
Migraine	40 (1.2)	69 (2.3)	109 (1.8)
Others*	157 (4.9)	130 (4.4)	287 (4.6)
Total	3226 (100.0)	2989 (100.0)	6215 (100.0)

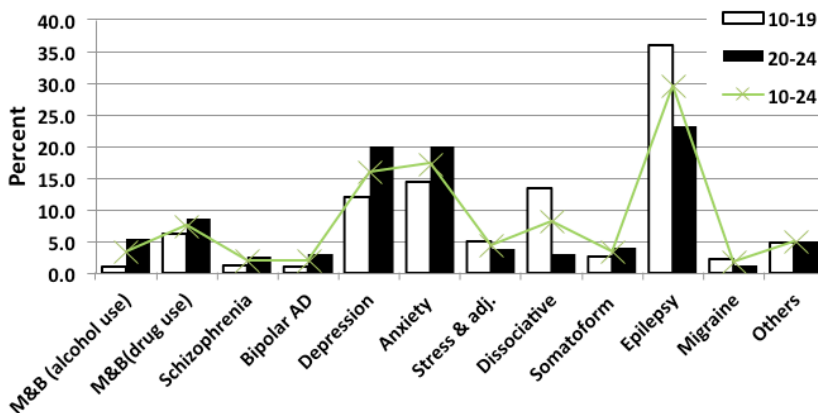
*Note: *Total of 49 categories of mental disorders recorded in OPD. N=6,215. Figures in brackets are in percent.*

In Bhutan, most people believe that epilepsy (often expressed as disease related to pig) can be healed by prostrating oneself before a wooden tub used to feed pigs. Some people believe that forcing a person to smell foul odour during an epileptic fit can help. These acts signify some disgrace or stigmatisation. For all age groups, majority of the outpatients suffered

from depression (N=6,297, 21%) followed by epilepsy (N=1,181, 19%) and anxiety (N=1,180, 19%). Depression was more common among female outpatients, while mental and behavioural disorder due to drug abuse, and alcohol misuse were more common in male outpatients.

As shown in figure 4.3, epilepsy (N=606, 29.5%) was the most common mental disorder of young outpatients (10-24). Anxiety (N=354, 17.3%) and depression (N=328, 16%) were the next most common mental disorders. Anxiety as a primary diagnosis almost always co-segregated with depression as the secondary diagnosis and visa versa. When considered together, anxiety and depression made up the most common mental disorder among young outpatients (N=682, 33.5%). Other common disorders reported among young outpatients were dissociative disorder (8.1%) and mental and behavioural disorders due to multiple drug use (7.5%) with 167 and 153 patients respectively.

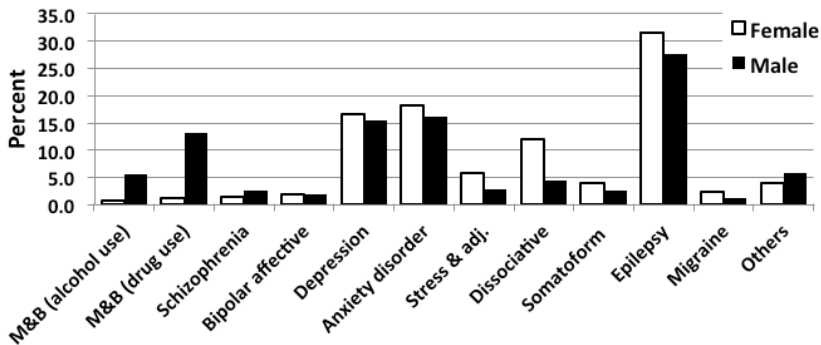
Figure 4.3: Young patients with different mental disorder by age group in percent, 2000-2014



A closer look at the disorder pattern, as shown in figure 4.4, reveals that more young female outpatients were diagnosed with epilepsy (N=310, 31.5%) compared to the males (N=296, 27.9%). Similarly, more young female outpatients were diagnosed with anxiety disorders (N=180,

18.3%) and depression (N=163, 16.6%) compared to their male counterparts. More male young outpatients were diagnosed with mental and behavioural disorders related to drug abuse (N=140, 13.1%). Of the total 61 mental disorder cases (related to young outpatients) recorded in the OPD, JDWNRH from 2000-2014, 49 cases were grouped as “Others” which accounted for about 5%.

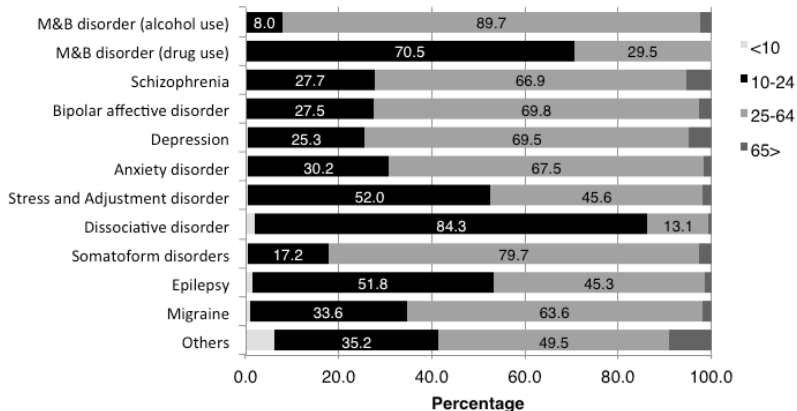
Figure 4.4: Young people with mental disorders by sex in percent



Comparison of mental disorders by age group, 2000-2014

Figure 4.5 shows that there is a huge age variation among the outpatients diagnosed with various mental disorders. Majority of the depressed outpatients were adults (70%) and young outpatients made up about 25%. Rest were children below 10 years. The outpatients with mental and behavioural disorder resulting from alcohol misuse were mostly adults. However, outpatients with mental and behavioural disorder due to multiple drug abuse were mostly young people (70.5%). Similarly, diagnoses such as epilepsy, dissociative disorder and stress and adjustment disorders were more common among younger outpatients. Comparatively small numbers of under-10 and above-65 mental disorder outpatients were reported.

Figure 4.5: People with different mental disorders by age groups, (all ages), 2000-2012



Discussion and implications for policy

This study examined the prevalence and types of mental disorders among young people (constituting adolescents and youth as previously defined). The aim of the study was to elucidate the numbers of outpatients diagnosed with different types of mental disorders and the yearly trend. The focus was more on younger outpatients. The findings, though limited in its own terms, are expected to be useful for meaningful debate among policymakers, social development workers, and in fact, anyone interested in the theme and issues. The study points out that much needs to be done both in terms of data generation and analysis.

The key findings were that in all age groups, about 21% of the total mental health outpatients at JDWNRH for the period between 2000 and 2012 were diagnosed with depression, the next being epilepsy (19%) and anxiety disorder (19%). Importantly, out of the total mental health outpatients, 33% constituted young people of age between 10 and 24 spread out almost equally across the adolescent group (10-19) and youth group (20-24). Among the young outpatients, epilepsy (29.5%) was the most common disorder, next was anxiety (17.1%) and then depression (16%). If we combine anxiety and depression as a type of depression, then it becomes the most common diagnosis for young outpatients.

The outpatients with mental and behavioural disorders are induced by drugs and/or alcohol abuse were common in the younger group (70.5%) while those that were caused by alcohol misuse were common in the adult group (24-65). Depression was more common among female outpatients than their male counterparts. This conforms to the findings of WHO (2008). Epilepsy seems to affect more female adolescents than any other age groups. Mental and behavioural disorders related to drug abuse was more common among the male outpatients and in younger age group.

That we have continued to observe the rising trend of mental disorders, especially among younger populace calls for further investigation on the risk factors and discussion on how to improve coverage and quality of preventive and treatment measures. The analysis was restricted to the cases that were reported at just one hospital, that too, only the outpatients.

This analysis was conducted using the OPD administrative data from JDWNRH, Thimphu and a study that includes in-patient medical records would broaden the scope of the this type of analysis. Our results suggest that there are areas of concern developing that can be observed through analysis of outpatient data. However, future work may include in patient data as well as outpatient records. Further, in contrast to sample survey, the results cannot be generalised for the entire country nor can it be rendered specific to a particular area, in this case Thimphu Dzongkhag. Consequently, the observations presented in this study may underestimate the prevalence of mental disorders and the yearly trends that appear to be developing over the last several years.

Another important variable that limited this study is the inability to identify specific socio-economic backgrounds of the patients. The data did not discriminate occupational status, current residence, birth place, and the situational history of the patients, therefore, important considerations for societal influence on mental conditions and the possible policy and program changes that could be considered based on this data is a challenge.

Finally, policy considerations are increasingly faced with weighing the burden of disease and the associated medical costs against minimal allocations of financial resources for mental health care, including infrastructures and health workers. The mental disorder among

adolescents and youths is estimated to contribute to 13 percent of the global burden of disease (WHO 2008). In Bhutan, only one percent of the total health budget is allocated for mental health care. Although limited in scope, our results suggest that the mental health landscape within Bhutan is changing and there is reason to contemplate more comprehensive studies in the future.

Reference

Cuellar, Alison Evans, Larkin S. McReynolds, and Gail A. Wasserman (2006). A cure for crime: can mental health treatment diversion reduce crime among youth? . *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 25, No. 1 : 197-214.

Dorji, Chenchho (2004). Achieving Gross National Happiness through community-based mental health services in Bhutan. In *Gross National Happiness and Development*, Karma Ura and Karma Galay, 599-628. Thimphu: Centre for Bhutan Studies.

Dorji, Lham (2015). Sexuality and reproductive health of adolescents and youth in Bhutan. Monograph No.7. Thimphu Bhutan: National Statistics Bureau & UNFP.

Joe, Sean, Emanique Joe, and Larry L. Rowley (2009). Consequences of physical health and mental illness risks for academic achievement in grades K. In *Review of Research in Education, Vol. 33, Risk, Schooling, and Equity*: 283-309.

Kessler, RC., P. Berglund, O. Demle, R. Jin, KR. Merikangas, and EE. Walters (2005). Lifetime prevalence of and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the national comorbidity survey replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*: 62:593–603.

McLeod, Jane D., Ryotaro Uemura, and Shawna Rohrman (2013). Adolescent mental health, behaviour problems, and academic achievement . *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Vol. 53, No. 4 (December)*: 482-497.

Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (2013). Labour Force Survey Report 2013. Thimphu Bhutan.

Monahan, John, and Henry J. Steadman (2010). Crime and mental disorder: An epidemiological approach. *Crime and Justice, Vol. 4*: 145-189.

Nirola, DK. (2010). Where psychiatrist are scarce: Bhutan. *Asia Pac Psychiatry*: 126.

Office of the Census Commissioner (2005). Population & Housing Census of Bhutan 2005." Thimphu.

Patel, Vikram, Alan J Flisher, Sarah Hetrick, and Patrick McGorry (2007). Mental health of young people: A global public-health challenge. *Lancet*: 369:1302-1313.

Pelzang, Rinchen (2012). Mental healthcare in Bhutan: policy and issues." *WHO South-East Asia Journal of Public Health*: 339-346.

Robbins, Pamela Clark, John Monahan, and Eric Silver (2003). Mental disorder, violence, and gender . *Law and Human Behavior*, Vol. 27, No. 6, : 561-571.

WHO. <http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/bluebook.pdf> (accessed July 2015).

—. 2008. http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/GBD_report_2004update_full.pdf (accessed July Wednesday, 2015).

—. <http://www.who.int/en/>. August 2014. http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/ (accessed July Tuesday, 2015).

WHO (2010). Mental health and development: targeting people with mental health conditions as a vulnerable group. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Press.

CHAPTER V: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG YOUNG BHUTANESE PEOPLE USING NHS DATA

Lham Dorji

Introduction

As a supplementary to a seemingly restrictive analysis of the clinical records (outpatients data) on mental health illnesses, I looked into the cross-sectional National Health Survey (NHS, 2012) data¹¹ that might provide us a broad overview of mental health issues among young people. The analysis of clinical records (done in the previous chapter) is, firstly based on the records of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH) only, and secondly, it is limited to the Out Patients Department (OPD). Though the clinical records are direct measure of the official responses or treatments, they are rather inadequate measures of mental illness problems in the country. Such direct measures may be relevant to a certain extent in absence of other studies, but they may pose both conceptual and methodological problems, in that, these records do not allow identifying persons with and without problems and raises the question of the representativeness.

There are always ‘hidden persons’ in the clinical records. One common measure to unravel such hidden problems is to look into self-reported measures that are representative of the general population. Large sample surveys data can be used to analyse the prevalence of mental health problems in the whole population and in identifying persons ‘with’ and ‘without’ mental disorders. In addressing the limitations imposed by the analysis of clinical records, I explored the NHS data hoping to provide a more complete picture of the prevalence, extent, and distribution of self-reported, but least satisfactorily conceptualised (or broadly categorised) psychological phenomenon or mental conditions: loneliness and worrying, suicidal thought, and suicidal attempts. I have also included drinking alcohol and drug abuse, as they are usually associated with adjustment problems in young people. Alcohol and drugs are known to contribute to the development of mental health conditions as well as exacerbate pre-existing mental health problems.

¹¹ The official permission has been sought to use the PUF of the NHS data with the Ministry of Health (MoH) prior to the release of the NHS data.

The NHS had used the following questions to collect the information related to loneliness, worrying, suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts, and use of alcohol and drugs: (1) During the past 12 months, how often have you felt lonely? (2) During the past 12 months, how often have you been so worried about something that you could not sleep at night? (3) During the past 12 months, were you in a situation which made you to consider seriously ending your life? (4) How many times were you in such a situation that you considered ending your life? Have you consumed an alcoholic drink within the past 30 days? During your life, how many times did you drink so much that you were really drunk, that is, you staggered while walking or could not get up at all, could not speak right or threw up? In your life time have you ever, even once, used one or more drugs or substance to get high? And, how many times have you used (for each drug or substance mentioned) in the past 30 days?

Concept and definition

‘Loneliness’ in the present context is loosely defined as ‘that situation when someone feel physically and emotionally isolated from the networks of people, the situation when someone experience communicative isolation from others that may trigger sense of boredom and anxiety in that person’. Loneliness can be culturally determined, self-imposed, externally imposed, and real and unreal.

‘Worrying’ is understood as a normal response to uncertainty, but excessive worrying (to the extent of affecting sleep pattern) meet criteria for disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-IV), 4th ed. and qualify to be included as the form of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (S, Steven & G, Lauren, 2006). By definition, continual worrying is the state when a person is not able to control one’s emotional distress and anxiety, leading to clinically significant impairment in social, occupational or other daily activities. Worrying, though is an attempt to anticipate and prevent bad things from happening puts a person into anxiety, fear and then panicking (Stephen A. Diamond, 2010). Use of alcohol and drugs were considered as some form of mental disorders because they can be either the causes or results of certain mental issues.

Research questions

Little is known about the mental health illnesses among young Bhutanese population, even though we know that some understanding of the problems is critical to initiate new prevention and treatment strategies and improve the existing social and medical services. In this analysis, I propose to address the following questions:

1. How prevalent are the feeling of loneliness, worrying, suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts, alcohol use and drugs abuse among young people in Bhutan?
2. How are these mental conditions distributed by age, sex, place of residence, economic class and other variables?

Approach and limitations

I used simple descriptive analysis to determine prevalence, extent of the mental conditions: specifically, feeling of loneliness, worrying, suicidal thoughts, and suicidal attempts among young people (10-24), and their distribution across the country. For convenience, age group 20-24 is considered as the youth group, deviating from the official definition of youth.

One major limitation was that the NHS data did not have information on more scientifically and specifically categorised mental conditions as catalogued in the International Classification of Disease (ICD-10). The analysis is rather based on the blunt treatment of loneliness, worrying, and suicidal thoughts and attempts as mental or psychiatric conditions.

Results

Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis of the NHS, 2012 on six components of mental health, namely, feeling lonely, worrying, suicidal thought, attempt to commit suicide, alcohol consumption and drugs abuse shows the following results:

Loneliness

In all age groups (10-75), survey respondents who had reported they ‘always felt lonely’ was too insignificant compared to those who reported they ‘never felt lonely’ and they ‘felt lonely’ (combined always, sometimes and rarely lonely). Young respondents (10-24) who ‘always felt lonely’ was almost half the respondents (all ages, 10-75) who felt the same.

Relatively more adolescents (10-19) ‘never felt lonely’ than youths (20-24). The youth group (20-24) had the highest percentage (1.06%) reporting they ‘always felt lonely’. Less than 1% of young people ‘always felt lonely’ (details in table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Reported loneliness and its distribution across different age groups (%), NHS, 2012

Loneliness	10-75 (all ages)	10-24 (young people)	10-19 (adolescents)	Youth (20-24)
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Never felt lonely	26437 (66.45)	10341 (69.95)	7663 (72.23)	2679 (63.93)
Rarely	4874 (12.25)	1678 (11.35)	1113 (10.49)	565 (13.48)
Sometimes	8026 (20.17)	2677 (18.11)	1779 (16.77)	898 (21.43)
Always	418 (1.05)	87 (0.59)	43 (0.40)	44 (1.06)
Not reported	28 (0.07)	15 (0.10)	11 (0.10)	4 (0.11)
Felt lonely*	13338 (33.47)	4442 (30.05)	2935 (27.66)	1507 (35.97)
Total	39783 (100)	14800 (100)	10609 (100)	4191 (100)

* Combined felt lonely rarely, sometimes and always

As shown in table 5.2, Trongsa Dzongkhag had relatively the highest percentage of young people (43.1%) who ‘felt lonely’ while Samtse Dzongkha had the lowest percentage of young people who felt the same (17.42%). Zhemgang, Thimphu and Wangduephodrang

Dzongkhags had the highest percentage of young people reporting ‘they always felt lonely’.

Table 5.2: Dzongkhag-wise distribution of young people reporting ‘feeling lonely’

Dzongkhag	Never felt lonely	Rarely	Sometime	Always	Felt Lonely	Not reported
Trongsa	56.64	20.98	22.21	0.02	43.21	0.15
Punakha	56.56	18.68	23.96	0.3	42.94	0.5
Trashiyangtse	59.11	14.96	25.85	0.08	40.89	0
Pemagatshel	59.50	14.28	25.95	0.28	40.51	0
Paro	62.66	11.92	24.51	0.92	37.35	0
Zhemgang	63.55	20.22	15.02	1.21	36.45	0
Tsirang	65.27	19.56	14.4	0.78	34.74	0
Sarpang	66.80	13.89	18.87	0.24	33.00	0.2
Thimpu	67.34	15.91	15.71	1.04	32.66	0
Haa	67.66	16.86	14.59	0.83	32.28	0.06
Sjongkhar	69.67	6.74	22.93	0.65	30.32	0
Bhutan	69.88	11.34	18.09	0.59	30.02	0.91
Trashigang	70.76	2.08	26.96	0	29.04	0.2
Dagana	71.85	16.41	10.89	0.86	28.16	0
Chuka	73.08	7.15	19.47	0.3	26.92	0
Bhumtang	74.70	5.54	19.31	0.44	25.29	0
Mongar	76.44	8.09	14.97	0.5	23.56	0
Lhuntse	77.54	4.71	17.45	0.09	22.25	0.2
Wangdiphodrang	78.04	6.67	12.6	1.28	20.55	1.42
Gasa	79.54	7.62	12.74	0.1	20.46	0
Samtse	82.59	7.9	8.93	0.59	17.42	0

Young people feeling lonely were distributed by sex, residence, and wealth Index. The majority of young people who ‘never felt lonely’ as well as those who ‘always felt lonely’ were based in rural areas. About 57% of young people who ‘always felt lonely’ were young females and the rest were young males (43%). Among young people who ‘always felt lonely’ the majority of them belonged to the poorest quintile. (see table 5.3 for details).

Table 5.3: Distribution of ‘loneliness reporting’ among young people by sex, residence and wealth quintile (%)

Characteristics	Never	Rarely (a)	Sometime (b)	Always (c)	Not rep.	Total
Residence						
Urban	24.21	28.51	22.73	27.82	28.33	24.46
Rural	75.79	71.49	77.27	72.18	71.67	75.54
Sex						
Male	46.79	49.13	39.28	42.8	80.85	45.7
Female	53.21	50.87	60.72	57.2	19.15	54.3
Wealth Index						
Poorest	20.47	16.24	16.33	24.84	14.88	19.26
Second	19.98	16.1	22.3	15.13	42.53	19.95
Middle	20.35	20.77	20.88	20.94	14.26	20.49
Fourth	20.01	22.7	22.11	20.31	28.33	20.71
Richest	19.19	24.19	18.38	18.78	0	19.59

Note: The calculation is based on the total respondents within each characteristics (residence, sex and wealth quintile), so different responses related to each characteristic were calculated out of 100.

Feeling worried

The responses to the second question pertaining to ‘worrying to the extent that one could not sleep’ shows that less than one percent of the total population ‘always felt worried’. About 0.94% of youth (20-24)

‘always felt worried’ which was highest among all age groups. The adolescents group had the highest percentage of individuals who ‘never worried’ and lowest percentage ‘worrying always’. Among all the survey participants (aged, 10-75), 23.73% of them ‘felt worried sometimes’; 21.88% of the youths reported the same. Details shown in table 5. 4.

Table 5.4: Reporting of being worried across different age groups

Felt worried	General (10-75)	10-24 (Young people)	10-19 (adolescents)	20-24 (Youth)
	N	N	N	N
Never	24,810 (62.36)	10,567 (71.40)	7,905 (74.52)	2,661 (63.50)
Rarely	5,159 (12.97)	1,639 (11.08)	1,069 (10.08)	570 (13.60)
Sometimes	9,439 (23.73)	2,510 (16.97)	1,594 (15.02)	916 (21.88)
Always	342 (0.86)	68 (0.46)	28 (0.27)	39 (0.94)
Not reported	31 (0.08)	14 (0.10)	11 (0.10)	3 (0.08)
Total	39,783 (100)	14,800 (100)	10,609 (100)	4,191 (100)

The Dzongkhags with young people (10-24) having ‘felt worried’ (derived by combining figures for always, sometimes, and rarely worried) within last twelve months and falling above the average (Bhutan) were Trongsa, Punakha, Haa, Paro, Trashiyangtse, Zhemgang, Thimphu, Sarpang, Tsirang, Pemagatshel and Dagana (in order). About 17% of young people in Samtse Dzongkhag ‘felt worried’-the lowest among 20 Dzongkhags. Almost similar trend was observed with the general population. About 29% of young people in the country ‘felt worried’; 71.40% did not ‘feel worried’. For more details, see table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Distribution of different age groups based on the responses to a worry question by Dzongkhags

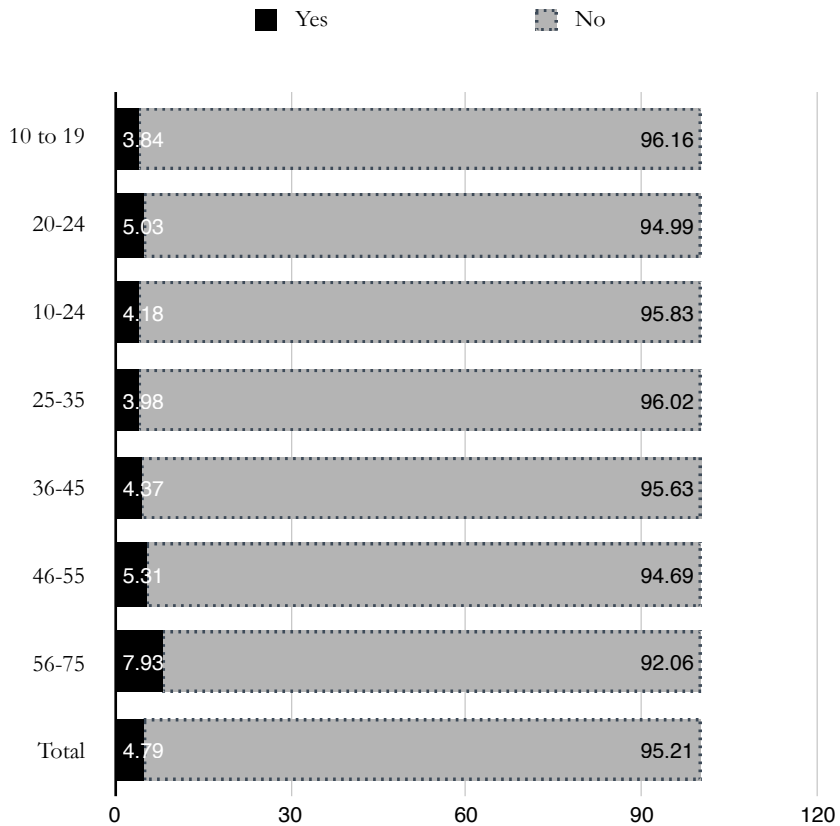
Dzongkhag	General (10-75)		Young people (10-24)		Adolescent (10-19)		Youth (20-24)	
	NFW	FW	NFW	FW	NFW	FW	NFW	FW
Trongsa	44.32	55.56	53.87	45.98	56.85	42.94	46.03	53.97
Punakha	44.10	55.58	57.01	42.49	60.58	38.88	44.91	54.69
Haa	54.89	45.09	59.35	40.59	62.77	37.16	49.11	50.89
Paro	57.88	42.12	62.40	37.60	66.45	33.54	53.35	46.65
Tyangtse	58.04	41.92	63.57	36.42	64.11	35.89	61.53	38.47
Zhemgang	51.35	48.64	65.32	34.68	67.98	32.01	57.82	42.18
Thimpu	63.00	37.00	65.78	34.23	70.25	29.75	59.02	40.98
Sarpang	53.07	46.93	66.47	33.54	71.05	28.95	56.34	43.66
Tsirang	54.41	45.47	68.17	31.83	71.70	28.30	60.11	39.89
Pgatshel	66.65	33.35	70.13	29.86	72.35	27.65	63.13	36.87
Dagana	61.56	38.44	70.87	29.13	73.49	26.51	63.06	36.94
Average (Bhutan)	62.36	37.56	71.40	28.51	74.52	25.37	63.50	36.42
Sjongkhar	64.82	35.13	71.66	28.34	73.54	26.46	65.14	34.86
Trashigang	62.01	37.83	75.00	24.80	76.57	23.16	70.03	29.96
Wangdue	67.25	32.01	75.65	22.93	78.79	19.75	66.97	31.72
Bhumtang	66.27	33.73	76.20	23.80	77.02	22.98	74.40	25.60
Gasa	71.53	28.47	76.44	23.56	76.76	23.24	75.71	24.29
Chuka	67.46	32.51	78.28	21.70	81.00	19.01	70.11	29.81
Mongar	70.05	29.86	80.33	19.67	82.44	17.56	74.35	25.65
Lhuntse	71.01	28.90	81.72	18.08	83.92	16.02	73.76	25.54
Samtse	69.69	30.31	83.17	16.82	86.50	13.50	74.24	25.77

Note: *Never Felt Worried* was abbreviated as *NFW* and *Felt Worried* as *FW* in table 5.5.

Suicidal ideation

The responses to the question ‘whether in the past 12 months, a respondent was in a situation that made him or her to consider seriously ending his or her life’ shows that, among young people (10-24), 4.18% thought about committing suicide. Overall, the 20-24 age group had the highest percentage (5.03%) of the respondents with suicidal ideation. The highest percentage of people who had experienced suicidal ideation was in the age group 56-75. See figure 5.1 for details.

Figure 5.1: Suicidal ideation among respondents distributed across different age groups (%)



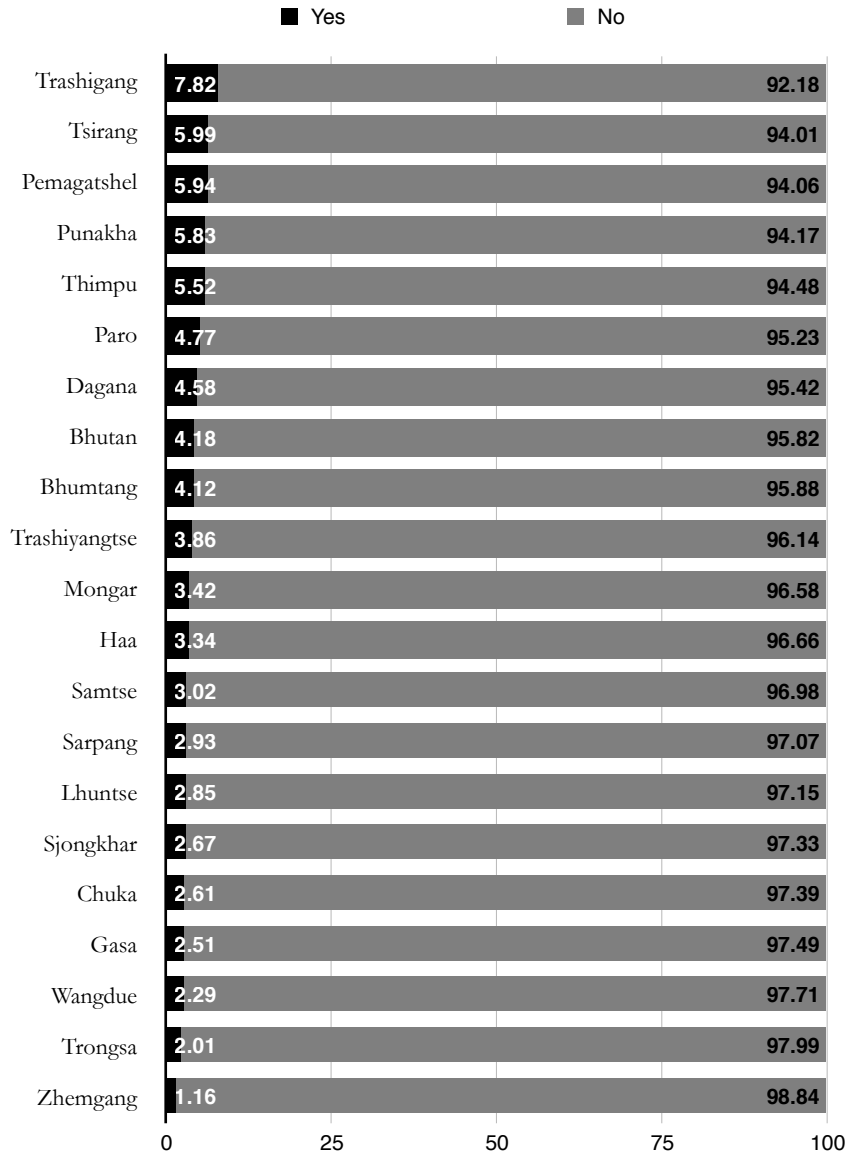
Among the Dzongkhags, Thimphu Dzongkhag reported the highest percentage of young people with suicidal ideation (21.49%) and without (16.05%) suicidal ideation. The next highest was Trashigang Dzongkhag (14.84%). Gasa Dzongkha had least number of young people who had suicidal ideation (as shown in table 5.6). Percentages for the presence or absence of suicidal ideation for each Dzongkha was calculated out of the total respondents (entire country).

Table 5.6: Percentage of young people who reported suicidal ideation by Dzongkhags.

Dzongkhag	Yes	No	Total young people
Thimpu	21.50	16.05	16.27
Trashigang	14.85	7.63	7.94
Samtse	7.57	10.59	10.46
Paro	6.75	5.88	5.91
Mongar	5.75	7.08	7.03
Pemagatshel	5.49	3.79	3.86
Chuka	5.33	8.67	8.53
Dagana	4.87	4.42	4.44
Punakha	4.72	3.32	3.38
Tsirang	4.13	2.83	2.88
Sarpang	3.57	5.15	5.09
Samdrupjongkhar	3.44	5.47	5.39
Trashiyangtse	2.92	3.18	3.17
Bhumentang	2.36	2.4	2.4
Wangdue	2.05	3.8	3.72
Lhuntse	1.74	2.59	2.55
Trongsa	1.04	2.2	2.16
Zhemgang	1.00	3.7	3.59
Haa	0.71	0.9	0.89
Gasa	0.21	0.35	0.34

Figure 5.2 shows distribution of young persons within each Dzongkhag reporting they had suicidal ideation or thought. In Trashigang Dzongkha, 7.82% of young people experienced suicidal ideation (out of the total young people in that particular Dzongkhag). In Zhemgang Dzongkha, 1.16% of young persons in the Dzongkhag experienced suicidal ideation against 98.84% who did not experienced the same thought.

Figure 5.2: Percentage of young persons (10-24) within each Dzongkha g reporting to having suicidal thought.



The majority of young people who experienced suicidal thought constituted the females (62.29%), those young women and girls living in rural areas (77.96%), and those belonging to second and fourth wealth quintiles. Details given in table 5.7.

Table 5.7: Percentage of young people (10-24) who reported to having suicidal though by sex, residence and wealth quintile.

Characteristics	Yes	No	Total young persons reporting to suicidal though question
Sex			
Male	37.71	46.05	45.7
Female	62.29	53.95	54.3
Residence			
Urban	22.04	24.56	24.46
Rural	77.96	75.44	75.54
Wealth Index			
Poorest	15.61	19.42	19.26
Second	23.39	19.8	19.95
Middle	20.26	20.5	20.49
Fourth	22.42	20.63	20.71
Richest	18.32	19.64	19.59

Suicidal attempts

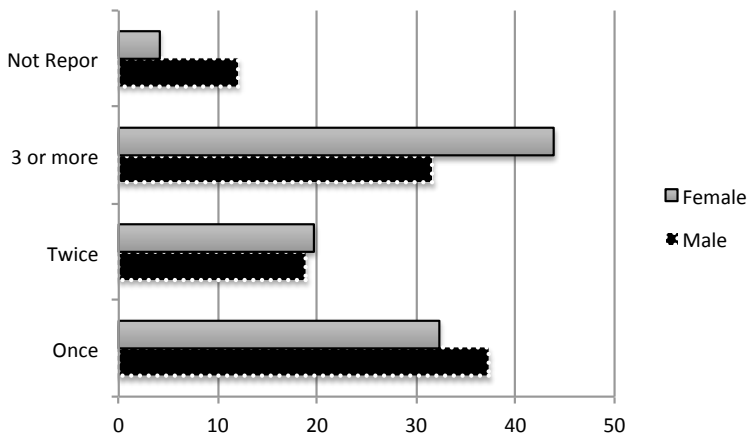
About 3.90% of total young people (10-24) had reported having attempted to commit suicide while 4.54% of the total population of all ages (10-75) had attempted to kill themselves (not shown in table below). Among young people who had attempted suicide, 42.26% had attempted suicide more than thrice, 20.87% attempted twice, and 36.87% once (table 5.8).

Table 5.8: Percentage of young people who reported to have attempted suicide by number of times

Suicide attempts	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
	Age group (10-24)			Age group (10-75)		
Once	212	36.87	36.87	476	26.37	26.37
Twice	120	20.87	57.74	460	25.48	51.85
3 or more times	243	42.26	100	869	48.14	100
Total	575	100.00		1,805	100.00	

As shown in figure 5.3, more young females had attempted suicides for more than three times than young males. However, more young males had reported having tried to kill themselves once than young females.

Figure 5.3: Percentage of young people who reported to have attempted suicide by gender



Recorded suicide (completed and attempted)

The recorded suicide rate on average for five years (2009-2013) was estimated at 9.8 per 100,000 population per year whereas suicidal

attempts for the same period was estimated at 2.25 per 100,000 population per year (table 5.9).

Table 5.9: Recorded completed suicide and attempts and their rates

Year	Population	Suicide	Attempt to suicide	Completed suicide rate/ 100,000	Suicide attempt rate/ 100,000
2009	683407	72	29	10.54	4.24
2010	695822	57	39	8.19	5.60
2011	708265	66	5	9.32	0.71
2012	720679	88	4	12.21	0.56
2013	733004	64	1	8.73	0.14

Source: Situation Analysis of Suicide in Bhutan (data sourced from RBP).

Alcohol consumption

The NHS survey asked the respondents the question ‘Have you ever consumed an alcoholic drink such as *ara*, beer, wine, whiskey, etc.’? The majority of young people who tried alcohol in their lifetime was in the youth group (20-24). Lower percentage of adolescents had tried alcohol in their lifetime (figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Percentage of young people who reported having ever drunk alcohol in their lifetime



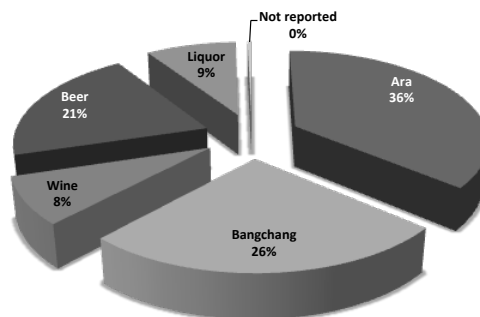
Among young people who had reported to be drinking, 78.53% had consumed alcohol within last 30 days. Slightly lower percentage of adolescents compared to other age groups consumed alcohol within last one month (figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Alcohol consumption among young people by age groups within last one month



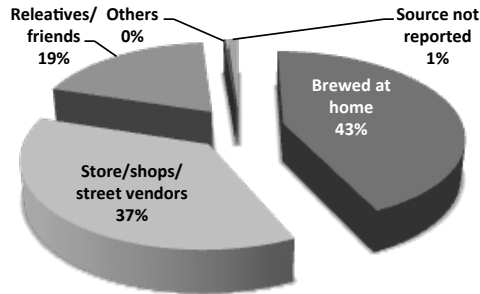
Types of drinks young people consumed within last 30 days are shown in figure 5.6. As was revealed by the BLSS, 2007 data (Dorji, L, 2012), *ara* and *bangchang* (home-brewed) remained the most popular drinks in 2012 even among young population.

Figure 5.6: Types of drinks consumed by young people by age groups within last 30 days



The main sources of drinks for young people are presented in figure 5.7. The home-brewed alcoholic drinks were identified as the common drinks [for them] followed by those alcoholic drinks available in the market.

Figure 5.7: Main sources of drinks for young people



Young people reporting they drank alcohol within last 30 days were highest in Zhemgang and Haa Dzongkhags. Figure 5.8 presents the details.

Figure 5.8: Young people who drank alcohol within last 30 days by Dzongkhags (%).

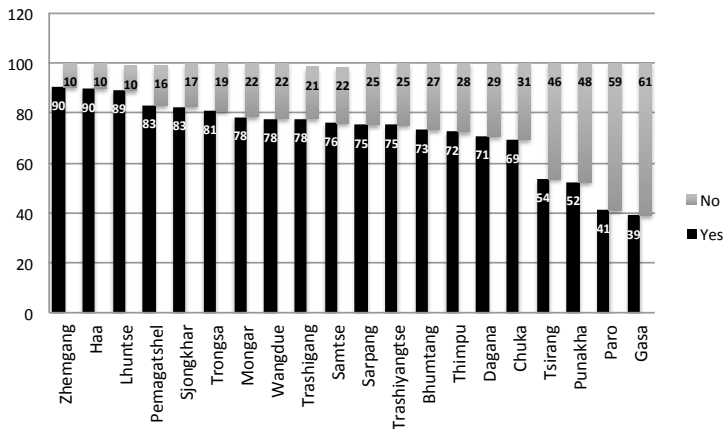
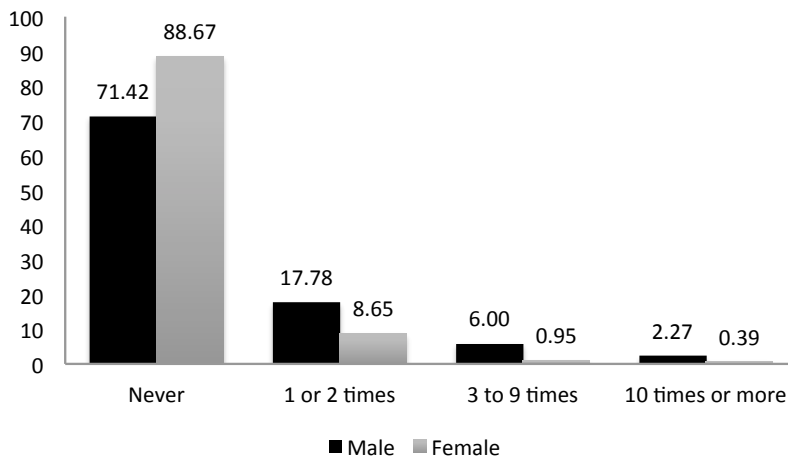


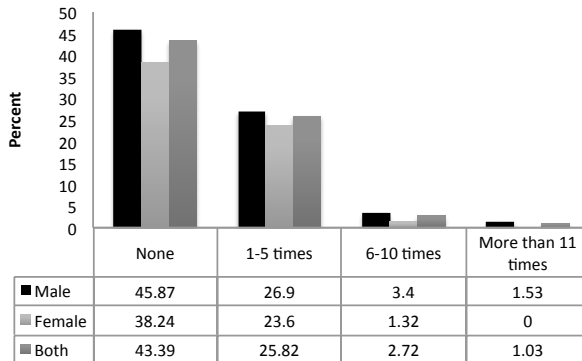
Figure 5.9 shows the percentage of young people by sex reporting ‘they were drunk in lifetime such that they staggered while walking or could not get up at all, could not speak right or threw up’. More young males were heavily drunk than young females. Roughly 2.27% of young people who drank to the extent of getting drunk for more than 10 times a month were males. Data shows that while young females drink, they do not drink as much as young males.

Figure 5.9: Percentage of young people who reported heavy drinking by sex



About 26% of young people had the episodic heavy or binge drinking within 30 days. Percentage of heavy drinkers was higher among young males than among females (figure 5.10). The social cost of binge drinking to the society is expected to be higher than chronic drinking, as binge drinkers have higher risks of crime and violence than chronic drinkers (Lham Dorji, 2012). It has been observed that most street violence takes place on weekends, especially Friday nights. Those people who drink heavily on those occasions are considered as episodic heavy or binge drinkers.

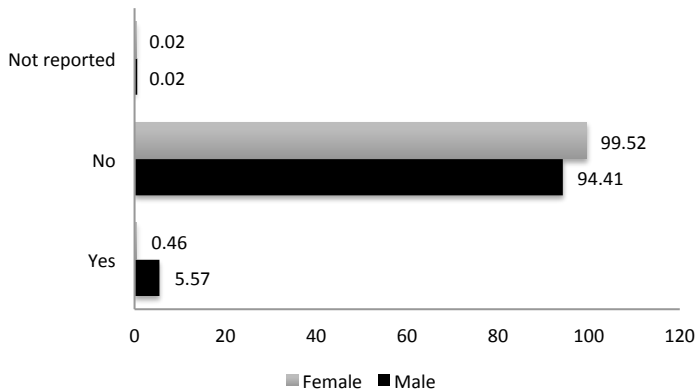
Figure 5.10: Percentage of binge drinkers among young people by sex



Drugs abuse

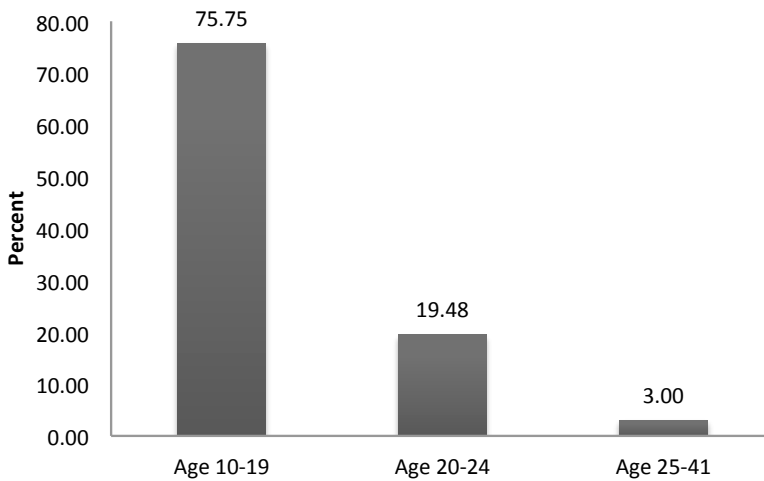
More than 5% of young people had reported they used one or more drugs to get high once in their lifetime. Young female reporting the same was insignificant comparing to young male (figure 5.11)

Figure 5.11: Use of drugs once in a lifetime among young people by sex (%)



The majority of drugs abusers had started using drugs when they were adolescents (10-19). Figure 5.12 shows that there were a few (about 3%) who began using drugs in their adulthood.

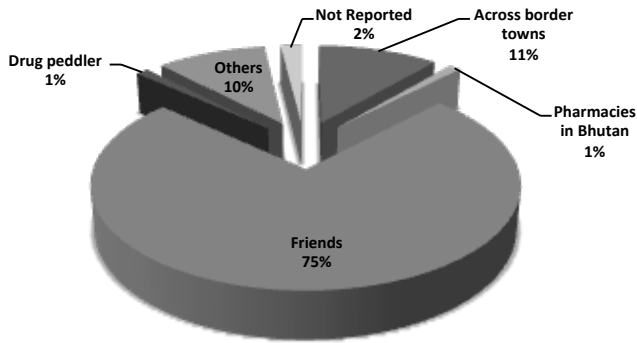
Figure 5.12: Reported age of drug initiation (shown by age groups)



The main source of drugs for young people was ‘friends’ followed by ‘from across the borders’ (figure 5.13). Though, percentage of young people acquiring drugs from the local traffickers was reported to be very low, their friends who provided them drugs could have acquired the same from the local drug peddler.

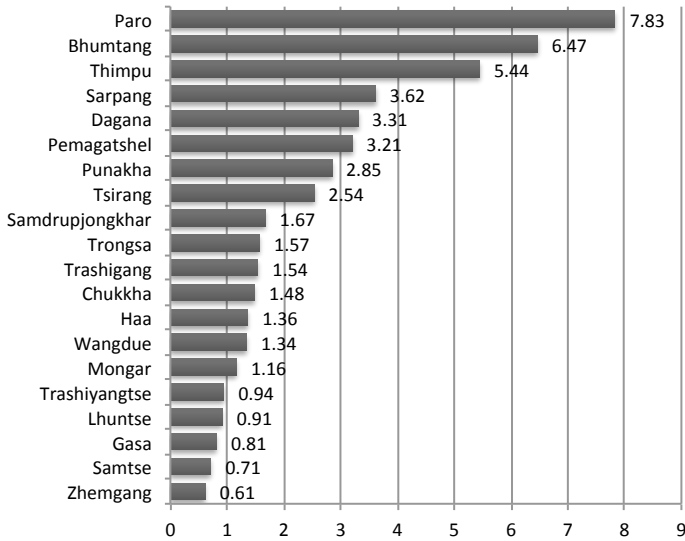
The fact that friends were the main source of drugs imply that peer pressure and companionship play a big role in proliferating substance abuse among young people. Young people seem to be developing some *esprit de corps* through drugs sharing and networking often forcing them to commit crime in companionship as was revealed by the qualitative study.

Figure 5.13: Source of drugs for young people (%)



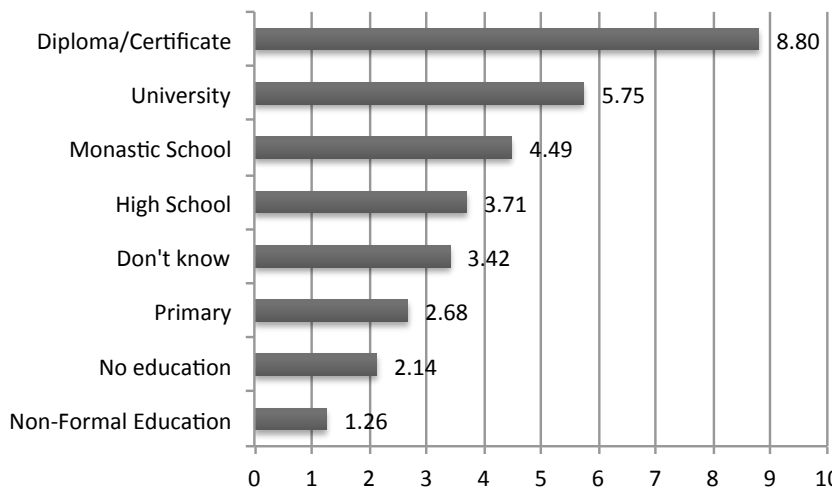
Paro Dzongkhag reported the highest number of young people who had ever used drugs. Zhemgang Dzongkhag had the lowest number of young people who had ever abused drugs (figure 5.14).

Figure 5.14: Young people who ‘ever used drugs’ by Dzongkhags (%)



Young people with diploma or certificate education constituted the majority of young people who ‘ever used drugs’. Those individuals with university education made up a substantial percentage of young people who had ever used drugs (figure 5.15). Young people with the monastic education may include *gomchens* and ex-monks.

Figure 5.15: Education background of young people who had ‘ever abused drugs’ (%)



Young people’s mental conditions

From table 5.10, it can be concluded that experiences related to emotional disturbance such a loneliness and worrying were typically common among young females than young males. The use of alcohol and drugs was common among young males than young females. Suicidal ideation and attempts were more prevalent among young females. Not much needs to understood why more young males were into drugs and alcohol than young females, but there is the urgent need to determine why more young females tend to be emotionally disturbed and vulnerable to suicide than young males.

Table 5.10: Summary of young people’s mental conditions disaggregated by sex

Factors	Total n (%)	Male n (%)	Female n (%)
Age			
10-19 (adolescents)	10608 (71.68)	4924 (46.41)	5685 (53.59)
20-24 (youth)	4,190 (28.32)	1841 (43.92)	2350 (56.08)
10-24	14799 (37.20)	6764 (45.71)	8035 (54.29)
Sex			
Male	6764 (45.71)		
Female	8035 (54.29)		
Felt lonely			
Yes	4442 (30.05)	1913 (43.07)	2529 (56.93)
Rarely	1678 (11.35)	824 (49.13)	854 (50.87)
Sometimes	2677 (18.11)	1052 (39.28)	1625 (60.72)
Always	87 (0.59)	37 (42.80)	50 (60.72)
No	10341 (69.95)	4838 (46.79)	5053 (53.21)
Ever worried			
Yes	4219 (28.53)	1855 (43.96)	2364 (56.04)
Rarely	1640 (11.09)	763 (46.65)	876 (53.45)
Sometimes	2511 (16.98)	1064 (42.38)	1447 (57.62)
Always	68 (0.46)	27 (39.92)	41 (60.08)
Never	10566 (71.46)	4898 (46.36)	5667 (53.64)
Ever been drunk			
Yes	500 (20.62)	409 (81.89)	91 (18.11)
1 to 2 times	358 (14.76)	279 (78.08)	79 (21.92)
3 to 9 times	103 (4.25)	94 (91.67)	9 (8.33)
>10 times	39 (1.61)	36 (91.09)	3 (8.91)
Never	1925 (79.38)	1122 (58.27)	803 (41.73)
Ever used drugs			
Yes	414 (2.80)	377 (91.07)	37 (8.93)
No	14382 (97.20)	6386 (44.40)	7996 (55.60)
Suicidal ideation			
Yes	618 (4.18)	233 (37.71)	385 (62.29)
No	14180 (95.82)	6531 (46.06)	7649 (53.94)
Suicidal attempt			
Once	212 (36.87)	87 (41.16)	125 (58.84)
Twice	120 (20.87)	44 (36.77)	76 (63.23)
> three times	243 (42.26)	74 (30.42)	169 (69.58)

Conclusion

In total, 14,799 young people (aged, 10-24) were taken into account in this simple descriptive analysis, accounting for about 37.20% of the total survey population. More adolescents were represented in the NHS than youths. There were also more young females than young males. Young people experiencing the feeling of loneliness all the time was very negligible.

About 30% of young people felt lonely among whom more young females reported they felt lonely than young males. Close to 29% of young people felt worried (always, sometimes and rarely combined) to the extent that they experienced troubled sleep. Again, more young females were reported with such emotional condition than young males. However, less than half the percent of young people reported they had been always worrying.

About 4.18% of young people had suicidal ideation, and young males experiencing this were little more than half the young females. This somewhat indicate that women are more inclined to experience suicidal thoughts than men. Around 4% of young people made self-murder attempts, and young females attempting suicide were almost double the young males.

Approximately, 21% of young people drank in their lifetime to that level that they got really drunk. Less than a quarter of them were young females. Only about 2% of young people drank for more than 10 times in their lifetime. Close to 3% of young people ever used drugs to get high in their lifetime and more than 90% of them were young males.

References

A.D, Stephen (2010). *Essential Secrets of Psychotherapy: Why We Worry (and what we can do about it)*. Psychology Today © [1991-2016](#) Sussex Publishers.

Lham Dorji (2012). *Alcohol Use and Abuse in Bhutan*. Thimphu: National Statistics Bureau.

S, Shearer & G, Lauren (2006). *The Patient with Excessive Worry*. The American Academy of Family Physicians.

UN (1985). *United Nation's Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice or the Beijing Rules (Resolution 40/33, 29 November 1985)*.

CHAPTER VI: LOCAL LEADERS' VIEWS ON ISSUES FACED BY YOUNG BHUTANESE PEOPLE

Tashi Dorjee¹²

Introduction

Bhutan has half of its total population under the age of 22 years (PHCB 2005). We have relatively large cohorts of young people who have substantially entered, or will soon enter, the prime ages for work and saving. This fact, coupled with declining fertility rates, means Bhutan has the opportunity to benefit from a demographic dividend – a potential economic boom that occurs when falling fertility rates coincide with a growing working-age population. However, to benefit from this dividend would be crucially determined by the country's policy environment.

In 2013, over 29% of Bhutan's total population was found to be between the ages 10 and 24 years (young people). In the same year, the youth unemployment rate was estimated at 7.3%. This burgeoning young population is therefore, both a challenge and opportunity for the country. The country must strive to help these young people to fulfil their individual potential, and empower them to bring benefits to their communities and their country. Since this youthful population is the powerful engine for development, we must invest in them, address their particular needs, include them in decision-making, and empower them to become the agents of change.

Moreover, as the current population ages and approaches retirement age, larger cohorts of workers will be retiring, while the numbers of new labour market entrants would be insufficient to replace them. As a result, a major labour shortage would be expected, which would pose a serious threat to macroeconomic performance, despite productivity and technological advances. Therefore, it is critical that we adopt right policies and take advantage of this demographic dividend to attain rapid and considerable improvements in the living standards of our people.

¹² Demographer at the National Statistics Bureau. For further inquiry about his article, you may please email him to tashidoz@yahoo.com

Why Study the Youth?

It is critical to study and understand their transition from the dependence childhood to adulthood's independence, because it is often considered that this period is a time of magnificent promise and insidious risk. Demographically, it is also characterised by a period of many critical transitions such as leaving school, seeking job, getting into relationship, first marriage, first pregnancy, and so on. In order to help our young people overcome these challenges, we need to properly understand their problems for better and informed decision-making.

Listening to the Local Leaders

To study the key issues and challenges being faced by young people in the local communities, twenty local leaders (tshogpa and many app) from across different regions of the country, attending the Training Programme on Applied Community Leadership Development from 1-12 December, 2014, were selected for the face-to-face interviews. They were asked about many aspects of the young people's engagement and participation in their communities, their opportunities, and of course their concerns. Most local leaders had urged government to be responsive to young people's needs and demands.

Harnessing youthful energy is considered to be a potential pathway to achieving peace, prosperity, economic growth and Gross National Happiness (GNH) in the country. On the other hand, we must understand to appreciate and acknowledge the bottlenecks that impedes their livelihood ambitions; and the State and Society have a huge responsibility to deal with their challenges and concerns.

Young people need the tools to succeed

The Government has a high stake of ensuring that our young people have adequate opportunities and tools necessary to succeed. According to this study group, who henceforth is referred to as 'the local leaders', the main issues our young people face are related to the unemployment problem. If we are to take advantage of the favourable demographic transition (as other regions have done), the local leaders felt that we need to invest and ensure that each of our young people is given an equal opportunity. They mentioned that more unemployed young people are likely to indulge in risky and antisocial behaviour like abuse of narcotic

drugs (mainly marijuana), alcohol consumption, and growing interest in pornography. The other common issues they considered affecting young people are family instability, parental negligence and chronic poverty forcing them to commit crime and violence, young girls getting pregnant at their teens, difficulty in acquiring citizenship cards (after class X and class XII) in the southern Bhutan, long walking distance to the education centres, and rural-urban migration.

Young people and substance abuse

The local leaders were of the view that increasing number of young people are abusing drugs and alcohol. They emphasised on the growing trend of young people abusing cannabis sativa (marijuana) grown wild in abundance. They identified several factors causing substance abuse and alcoholism among young people: peer pressure, family disruption, parental negligence, domestic violence, easy access to narcotic substances and alcohol, chronic poverty, and single parenthood. On the issue of alcohol misuse by young people, they stated that some young people considers drinking as a customary practice; some consumes alcoholic drinks for pleasure; and many drinks out of depression and despair over not being able to continue their education (due to lack of support from parents or ability of their parents to provide them required expenditures) or acquire the citizenship identity card after class ten and twelve.

Role of the Government and community in minimising the substance abuse

The local leaders mentioned that the governments (local and central) and the community need to expand social and economic opportunities for young people, provide them the skills to fully participate in the economy and public life, and promote healthy behaviour. They felt the Government and community should work closely to make young people aware of negative affects of drinking and abusing narcotic drugs.

“I feel many young people have started to quit drinking alcohol as a result of the awareness campaigns on negative affects of alcohol through pictorial exhibition and audio-video awareness campaigns. More such programmes are required” (*a local leader, December, 2014*)

They mentioned that at the community level, the teachers and elderly people need to play a greater role in preventing young people from

drinking and abusing drugs, while parents have the responsibility over taking care of their children. The parents must ensure that their children are well taken care of, and provided adequate guidance, monitoring and supervision. Some parents are too poor to support their children, while others simply fail to understand their children's expectations (being illiterate) as a result of which they fail to provide them proper guidance and supervision. The parents must be made aware of the importance of proper parenting through awareness programmes and education. They stated that the Government and the NGOs have the responsibility to educate illiterate parents on proper parenting.

Further, the local leaders suggested establishing more rehabilitation facilities and community police centres in different communities to prevent and reduce narcotic drugs abuse and alcoholism among young people. They mentioned about the need to strictly enforce the alcohol legislations (time and place of sale and prohibition of sale of alcohol to minors), make farm works attractive, and encourage Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) among young people through the provision of loans and entrepreneurship training.

Suicide among young people

The local leaders expressed their concerns about the growing phenomenon of suicide among young people. They identified unemployment, economic deprivation, substance abuse, isolation, parental negligence, family disruption, divorce, domestic violence, teachers' ill-treatment, poor school performance, early age pregnancy, and love affairs as some of the factors causing suicide among young people. Among them, the leading factors are romance, social stigma attached to out of wed-lock pregnancies and depression. The unemployment, substance abuse (drugs), degrading cultural values, lack of money, access to internet, desire to own expensive smartphones, and innocence are other possible factors causing suicide among young people.

Psychological or mental health problems among young people

The local leaders described feeling down and getting tensed, angry, anxious, or moody over someone or something for a long time as mental health problems. They said that there are some informal mechanism in the local communities to deal with mental health problems among young people. These include counselling by the local leaders, creating awareness

on the consequences of being affected by the mental health, and inculcating in them the sense of being good. In the worst case scenario, they said, the communities refer them to hospitals. To reduce the number of young people suffering from mental disorders, the local leaders suggested generating more employment opportunities and parental education on good parenting.

“By giving jobs, we can reduce number of young people suffering from mental illnesses because I feel the main cause of mental disorders is unemployment.” (*A local leader, December, 2014*)

Teenage pregnancy and early parenthood

The local leaders stated that teenage pregnancy is a common issue in the local communities. They attributed teenage pregnancies in rural areas to young people's lack of knowledge and understanding about the negative affects of early marriages and permissible age of marriages. They were concerned that lack of knowledge about legal consequences of early sex and marriages are putting many young men behind the bars. They felt the need to amend marriage and rape laws and suggested the marriageable age be brought down to 15 years. This age bar they think (based on their local experiences) would not pose much health complications and serious social issues.

“Early sex and marriage was a customary practice not so long ago; today, these acts have become crime.” (*A local leader, December 2014*)

Most of the local leaders said that many young people get married early when their parents cannot afford to send them to schools. In fact, some parents encourage their children to get married early and settle on the farms. Some poor parents send their daughters as babysitters elsewhere, who later become vulnerable to sexual exploitation, early sex and teenage pregnancies.

Lack of parental care and guidance is among the most cited reasons for teenage pregnancy and early parenthood among young people. They expressed their concerns about young people's exposure to porn movies through internet.

“Young people are very vulnerable. If they are left without proper parental guidance, they would become vulnerable to so many new

problems. Parents must provide them with proper guidance. But, some parents are uneducated and ignorant about the concepts and practices of good parenting.”(A local leader, December, 2014)

Type of crimes among young people

The type of crimes among young people, according to the local leaders, varies to a large extent from one community to another. The most common crimes among young people in the local communities are substance abuse, violence, theft and robbery. Indulging into sexual relationships leading to pregnancy at a very young age, sexual misconduct, abortion, rape and extra-marital affairs are other crimes common among young people.

Causes of crime among young people

The local leaders believed that there is some relationship between drugs abuse and alcohol consumption and crime among young people. They said that alcoholic drinks (both home-brewed and commercial) are readily available to them. They attributed unemployment to crime among young people. Some of them even felt that some parents pamper their children to such an extent that the latter's ego and self-gratification are boosted to the level that they resort to criminal activities out of fun, for experimentation and for self-gratification. They also mentioned that some young people get into crime due to parental negligence. Coming of mobile phones and with it the access to internet have exposed young people to so many vagaries of social ills. An easy access to contraceptive pills and abortion services across the borders are encouraging young people to conduct early sexual acts.

Interventions to reduce crime rates

To address antisocial and criminal behaviour among young people, the local leaders felt that the Government and NGO should invest in community development that cater to young people. These investments are needed for initiating community development and recreational activities for young people. They suggested advocating and educating young people on the criminal laws and setting up community police centres in the rural areas.

“If more cows means the need for more cowboys; so more young people getting into criminal activities means the need for more policemen.”(A local leader, December, 2014)

The local leaders mentioned that law enforcement is lagging citing that even if a person commit murder, an offender can be released on paying money in lieu of imprisonment, which was not the case in the past.

“Earlier laws were strict. Our laws, especially the enforcement of the laws today have become rather lenient. If an offender has committed a grievous crime, and his or her family is rich, that offender could be given less severe sentence. The enforcement of laws is not uniform.”(A local leader, December, 2014)

Why are our young people unemployed?

The youth unemployment rate has increased from 7.3% in 2012 to 9.6% in 2013. The pattern of high unemployment in the early age groups indicates that these are young people entering the labour market with certain level of education, but without required skills (2013, Labour Force Survey Report).

The most common reasons cited by the local leaders for growing unemployment are: low qualification, lack of skills, negative outlook on blue collar jobs, and hard life on the farms.

How can the Government bring young people to work?

The local leaders suggested the introduction of short-term and long-term skill development training programmes for those individuals who complete class X and XII to prepare them for various jobs. They suggested that the government should encourage entrepreneurial endeavours among young people by way of providing them with entrepreneurship skills, financial assistance (loans), lands, and other forms of support. They raised their concerns about disparity and favouritism in the job markets where young people with strong family background gets better jobs, whereas the poor and needy ones ends up running from one pillar to another post. They told that providing smooth transition from school to work is important for young people, otherwise, they may face the risk of deviating from the norms and resorting to antisocial

behaviour to cope up with the difficulties they face. They were also concerned about how secure the overseas employment are.

Some of them suggested that many government departments and agencies should be given power to recruit certain staff rather than the RCSC upholding the power. According to them, posts lay vacant in many government agencies and Dzongkhags, while young people are desperately looking for jobs.

“On one hand there is unemployment problem and on the other hand, there is shortage of manpower. Every time, we go to different government agencies we only hear they do not have adequate number of staff to do this and that. For example: in hospitals, if an X-ray operator is sick or on an urgent personal leave, there is no one to substitute that technician, and then patients end up waiting until he returns risking their lives. This is how system seems to be working.. There is a mismatch between unemployment situation and shortage of manpower in most of the government agencies. Employ our own young people if there are vacancies. This will help us to use our own you potentials and when they are used productively, they are not only prevented from antisocial and criminal acts, but they are contributing to the nation’s development.” (*A local leader, December, 2014*)

The local leaders expressed the need for the government to initiate big development projects equally in different regions of the country so that most young people do not migrate to a few major towns like Thimphu, Paro and Pheuntsholing. The issuance of citizenship cards to those individuals who had done well in their class X and XII exams after proper verification is what some local leaders felt the government need to urgently consider, which if not done may not only lead to a loss of young talents, but breed drugs addicts and criminals.

Interpreting *Gakid* and GNH at the grassroots

The concept of “Gakid” or happiness for the people at the grass roots is not just limited to having enough food, decent houses, and basic clothes, but it also meant having small family, access to basic education and other services such as easy census registration, and having adequate land for cultivation.

Happiness at the community level meant rapid and equitable socio-economic development, social interaction and co-operation among the community members, and building trust among them. They also mentioned about spiritual well being.

Conclusion

We believe that empowering our young people is an essential element for improving the community vitality. It is the responsibility of the Government and the community to encourage our young people across the nation to make healthy choices by addressing their problems. The local leaders and parents have a huge responsibility to provide counselling services to young people who are at risks of turning unproductive and antisocial. Young people has lot of potentials. The only thing is we do not have well-integrated and comprehensive policy frameworks to make the best use of young people and their potentials and make them contribute to the development of our country.