



Family Structure as Blueprints of Behavior and Juvenile Delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Juvenile delinquency is a growing concern globally, with family environments playing a critical role in shaping youth behavior. This study explored how family structure influences juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. Guided by Social Learning Theory and Strain Theory, it examined the effects of parental neglect, family conflict, household structure, and substance abuse on delinquent behavior. A mixed-methods design was adopted, involving 160 participants: 150 juveniles in conflict with the law and 16 parents or guardians. Juveniles were selected through simple random sampling, while purposive and snowball techniques identified guardians. Data were collected through questionnaires and document reviews from children's offices and probation records. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v26, while qualitative insights were examined thematically with NVivo. Findings revealed high exposure to dysfunctional family environments, with 78.3% reporting parental neglect, 72.8% citing absence of one or both parents, and 65.1% attributing delinquency to unstable family structures. Family conflict (69.4%) and household substance abuse (74.6%) also emerged as strong predictors of deviant behavior. The study concludes that fragile family systems are significant drivers of youth crime and recommends family-centered interventions to strengthen relationships, enhance parenting, and promote child protection.*

Keywords: *Family Structure, Blueprints, Behavior, Juvenile Delinquency, Loitoktok Sub-County, Kajiado County, and Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency—often defined as unlawful or antisocial behavior by individuals under the age of 18—remains a pressing global challenge with social, economic, and legal implications (OJJDP, 2021). Beyond its immediate effects on community safety, delinquency undermines family stability, strains judicial systems, and jeopardizes the developmental trajectories of young people (Neissl & Singer, 2020). Offenses frequently associated with juvenile crime include theft, assault, substance

possession, vandalism, and gang-related activities. Adolescence, a developmental stage marked by identity formation and heightened susceptibility to external influences, is particularly sensitive to the interplay of family, peers, and socio-economic conditions. This renders the family environment a central determinant of delinquent behavior.

Globally, juvenile delinquency has trended upward over the past decade. Reports from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020) highlight growing juvenile involvement in crime across regions, with Latin

America recording a 3.9% increase between 2014 and 2020, followed by Europe (2.6%) and North America (1.8%). In the United States, more than 700,000 arrests of minors were recorded in 2019, largely linked to theft, assault, and drug-related offenses (OJJDP, 2021). These patterns have prompted wide-ranging interventions, including school-based programs, diversion initiatives, and juvenile justice reforms. Yet, despite these strategies, persistent risk factors—particularly those rooted in family instability—continue to exacerbate youth involvement in crime (Howell & Griffiths, 2022).

The African context reflects similar challenges, though often intensified by systemic socio-economic conditions such as poverty, youth unemployment, and fragile educational systems. Walker and Maddan (2023) report that juvenile crime rates across Africa rose from 3.2% in 2014 to 5.7% in 2022. Nigeria and South Africa have experienced sharp increases, with adolescents engaging in crimes ranging from shoplifting to drug trafficking and violent gang activity (Adegoke, 2022; Mahlangu & Petersen, 2023). These trends suggest that beyond individual behavior, structural issues—including household poverty, absent parental supervision, and weakening social safety nets—intersect to drive youth crime across the continent.

Kenya mirrors these patterns, with growing evidence of juvenile delinquency in both urban and rural settings. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2022) and the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC, 2021), youth constitute a significant proportion of those arrested for crimes such as robbery, assault, and narcotics possession. A UN-Habitat study found that 22% of young people in Nairobi's informal settlements had been arrested at least once before age 18, reflecting a strong link between poverty, social exclusion, and juvenile offending (Otieno & Khamala, 2022). Despite the country's investment in community policing, child protection units, and diversion programs, outcomes have remained mixed due to weak parental engagement, inadequate enforcement of child protection laws, and limited integration of family-centered interventions (UNICEF Kenya, 2020; NCRC, 2021).

The role of the family in shaping youth behavior has been consistently emphasized in criminological and developmental literature. Scholars argue that dysfunctional family environments—including neglect, domestic conflict, unstable family structures, and substance abuse—serve as “blueprints of behavior” that predispose children to delinquency (Mwanza, Mwaeke, & Omboto, 2020; Wekesa & Mutua, 2023). Murray and Farrington (2020) contend that children raised in households marked by instability often lack emotional support, consistent supervision, and moral guidance, leaving them vulnerable

to antisocial behaviors and negative peer influences. However, much of this research has concentrated on urban contexts or national-level trends, overlooking localized family dynamics in semi-urban and rural communities.

Loitoktok Sub-County in Kajiado County presents such a case. Situated along the Kenya-Tanzania border, Loitoktok is a trade and transit hub marked by rapid socio-economic transitions. Rising informal settlements, labor migration, and urbanization have disrupted traditional family and kinship systems that once offered protective support to children. Recent reports by the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ, 2019) and Saitoti and Lekakeny (2023) document increasing cases of juvenile offending in the sub-county, with family disintegration, absentee parenting, and economic deprivation frequently cited as root causes. The erosion of extended Maasai family structures, compounded by poverty and cultural stigma around discussing domestic violence or parental substance abuse, leaves many children exposed to neglect and exploitation.

Despite these alarming trends, research on juvenile delinquency in Kenya has largely concentrated on major cities such as Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu, neglecting smaller semi-urban and rural contexts where unique socio-cultural and economic conditions shape youth behavior. This research gap is critical: national statistics provide useful overviews but fail to capture micro-level family dynamics that influence delinquency. In Loitoktok, for instance, the convergence of traditional Maasai values, modern economic pressures, and cross-border mobility creates a complex family environment that cannot be explained through urban-centered studies alone.

This study, titled *Family Structure as Blueprints of Behavior and Juvenile Delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya*, seeks to fill this gap by examining how parental neglect, domestic conflict, household structure, and substance abuse within families influence juvenile delinquency. By employing Social Learning Theory and Strain Theory as guiding frameworks, the study situates family as both a source of behavioral modeling and a potential site of stress that may drive youth toward crime. Unlike national-level analyses, this research foregrounds the lived experiences of juveniles and their families in Loitoktok, offering context-specific insights into how family dysfunction translates into delinquent outcomes.

The study's significance lies in its dual contribution. First, it provides an empirical foundation for localized policy and practice, informing educators, community leaders, and social workers who must design interventions responsive to Loitoktok's realities. Second, it enriches scholarly discourse by situating family structure as a central explanatory factor in juvenile delinquency within rural and

semi-urban African contexts. Ultimately, addressing youth crime in regions like Loitokitok requires moving beyond punitive justice systems toward family-centered approaches that strengthen parental capacities, promote conflict resolution, and reinforce child protection mechanisms.

In summary, juvenile delinquency is not merely a product of individual choice but a reflection of broader family and social systems. Loitokitok Sub-County exemplifies how fragile family structures, compounded by socio-economic pressures, shape the pathways of young people into delinquency. By focusing on this localized setting, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the family as both a risk and protective factor in youth behavior, underscoring the urgent need for family-centered interventions in Kenya's juvenile justice strategies.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A stable family environment is central to the emotional, social, and moral development of children. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that children raised in supportive and structured families are more likely to internalize prosocial values, resist negative peer influences, and avoid delinquent behavior (Lansford et al., 2021; Hoeve et al., 2020; Oliva et al., 2019; Pinquart, 2020). Conversely, disruptions such as parental neglect, absence of supervision, persistent domestic conflict, and substance abuse create conditions that heighten vulnerability to deviant behavior (UNICEF, 2021).

In Kenya, official statistics reflect a steady rise in cases of child delinquency. According to the Child Protection Information Management System, 791 cases were recorded in 2020–2021, increasing to 870 in 2021–2022, and 901 in 2022–2023. These upward trends underscore persistent challenges within family and community systems that ought to nurture children into responsible adulthood.

Locally, Loitokitok Sub-County in Kajiado County has witnessed a growing concern over the well-being of children raised in fragile family environments. Reports indicate that many households face socio-economic hardships, domestic violence, parental absenteeism, and substance abuse (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2020; National Council on the Administration of Justice [NCAJ], 2019). These conditions compromise parental care and guidance, leaving children exposed to emotional distress, inadequate supervision, and behavioral risks such as truancy, drug abuse, theft, and violence. The erosion of traditional extended family support structures, alongside increasing urbanization and cross-border socio-economic pressures, has further strained family cohesion in Loitokitok.

While global and national studies have established strong associations between family instability and juvenile delinquency, many focus on single dimensions such as parental incarceration (Murray & Farrington, 2018), family strain (Agnew, 2018), or single-parent households (Kimani, 2018). Such approaches, though valuable, often overlook the complex interactions among multiple family factors operating simultaneously within specific socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, research on juvenile delinquency in Kenya has disproportionately concentrated on major cities, leaving semi-urban and rural settings like Loitokitok under-researched. This gap limits the formulation of interventions that are culturally and contextually responsive.

Therefore, this study investigates the interplay of parental neglect, family conflict, household structure, and substance abuse in shaping delinquent behavior among juveniles in Loitokitok Sub-County. By situating the family as both a risk and protective factor, the study seeks to provide nuanced, localized insights into how fragile family environments act as “blueprints of behavior” that predispose children to delinquency. Addressing this gap is critical to informing family-centered policies and interventions tailored to the realities of Loitokitok and similar rural-border communities in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Juvenile delinquency remains a pressing concern globally, with family structure widely recognized as a critical determinant of youth behavior. Scholars have long emphasized that the family serves as the primary socializing agent, shaping values, attitudes, and coping strategies that either protect against or predispose children to deviant conduct. Research highlights how parental neglect, domestic conflict, disrupted family arrangements, and substance abuse within households create environments conducive to delinquent tendencies. Theoretical perspectives such as Social Learning Theory and Strain Theory have been pivotal in explaining these dynamics. While Social Learning Theory emphasizes the acquisition of behavior through observation and modeling within family contexts, Strain Theory underscores the socio-economic and emotional pressures that drive deviance. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive basis for examining how family structures in Loitokitok Sub-County influence juvenile delinquency, offering critical insights for both preventive interventions and policy formulation.

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study draws on two complementary criminological perspectives—Social Learning Theory and Strain

Theory—to examine how family structures influence juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County. Together, these theories offer a multidimensional framework for understanding both the acquisition of delinquent behavior and the socio-economic pressures that sustain it.

Social Learning Theory, pioneered by Bandura (1977), posits that behavior is acquired not only through direct reinforcement but also by observing and modeling significant figures such as parents, siblings, and peers. Within families, role modeling is shaped by parental presence, discipline styles, and household dynamics. In Loitoktok, parental neglect, domestic conflict, and substance abuse expose children to dysfunctional role models, normalizing aggression, truancy, or drug use as acceptable behaviors. Unstable family arrangements, such as single-parent or polygamous households, further alter the quality of role modeling, leaving children more vulnerable to negative peer influence. Although critics argue that the theory overemphasizes environmental modeling, its relevance to family-driven delinquency is evident in contexts where household dysfunction perpetuates antisocial learning.

Strain Theory, first advanced by Merton (1938) and expanded by Agnew (1992), explains delinquency as a response to structural barriers and emotional pressures. When legitimate means to achieve cultural or personal goals are blocked, individuals may resort to deviant coping strategies. In Loitoktok, disrupted family structures and economic hardship intensify strains such as emotional neglect, financial deprivation, and loss of positive stimuli. These stressors trigger frustration and anger, propelling youths toward delinquency. While the theory effectively links crime to socio-economic inequalities, it does not explain how delinquent techniques are learned—an area better accounted for by Social Learning Theory.

Integrating the two theories provides a robust framework. Social Learning Theory clarifies *how* delinquent behaviors are acquired within families, while Strain Theory explains *why* they emerge as coping responses to structural and emotional pressures. This combined lens enables a comprehensive understanding of juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok, supporting interventions that address both family dynamics and broader socio-economic constraints.

2.2 Empirical review

Juvenile delinquency, defined as deviant behavior among children below 18 years, has become a central concern in sociological, psychological, and legal scholarship, with family structure consistently identified as a major predictor of youth behavior. Family structure—encompassing household composition, stability, and functionality—plays

a crucial role in shaping children’s emotional, moral, and social development. Whether nuclear, single parent, extended, or polygamous, family arrangements determine the quality of supervision, role modeling, and support children receive, which in turn influence their likelihood of engaging in delinquent acts.

Studies across Kenya highlight that single-parent households face significant challenges that expose children to delinquency. Kamau and Wambugu (2020) argue that limited parental supervision, financial strain, and emotional insecurity in such families heighten vulnerability to truancy, aggression, and antisocial behavior. Mwangi and Otieno (2021) similarly demonstrate that children raised in environments characterized by divorce, separation, or parental conflict internalize stress that often manifests as violent or criminal behavior. Such disruptions deny children stable role models, making them susceptible to peer influence and substance abuse. However, these findings often generalize urban contexts, raising questions about their applicability to rural areas where cultural norms shape family roles differently.

The quality of parental involvement and disciplinary approaches has also been identified as a key determinant of youth outcomes. Njenga (2022) finds that stable nuclear families provide consistent emotional nurturing and supervision, significantly reducing delinquency. Conversely, disrupted households with absent caregivers create instability, fostering confusion and deviance. Wekesa and Mutua (2023) extend this analysis to extended family systems, noting that while they can provide additional caregiving, unclear authority and conflicting discipline sometimes exacerbate behavioral problems. These contrasting outcomes suggest that the influence of extended families may vary depending on cultural settings—an aspect inadequately addressed in existing research on rural Kenya.

Empirical studies in rural Kenya have begun to shed light on these dynamics, though often without sufficient attention to regional specificity. For example, Njeri (2020) examined single-parent households and youth crime in Nairobi, but the findings lacked relevance for rural communities such as Loitoktok, where polygamy and extended households remain common. Ochieng and Maina (2021) investigated polygamous families in western Kenya and found that divided parental attention and resource strain contributed to delinquency, particularly petty crime and drug use. These insights suggest possible parallels in Loitoktok, where pastoralist livelihoods and polygamy are prevalent, yet no comprehensive studies exist to confirm these associations in the local context.

Socio-economic pressures further interact with family dynamics to shape delinquency. Achieng and Kimani (2022) show that poverty in unstable families exacerbates risky behaviors such as theft and substance use, particularly when basic needs remain unmet. In Loitoktok, where poverty rates are high and access to education is limited, such pressures may compound the risks for children from disrupted households. However, few studies explicitly link socio-economic hardship, cultural practices, and family dynamics in semi-arid, rural environments, highlighting a gap in localized understanding.

Cultural norms in Maasai-dominated Loitoktok Sub-County also warrant attention. Practices such as early marriage, gendered labor divisions, and patriarchal authority reshape household roles and influence juvenile behavior. Saitoti and Lekakeny (2023) found that boys in rural Maasai households often assume adult responsibilities prematurely, increasing their exposure to deviant behavior. Yet, their work did not focus specifically on Loitoktok, leaving unexplored how cultural transitions and modern pressures interact with traditional structures to influence youth outcomes.

Comparative international research enriches these discussions by showing both the universality and contextual specificity of family influences. Anderson and Francis (2020) demonstrate in the U.S. that father absence strongly correlates with youth crime due to a lack of role modeling and socio-emotional support. In rural Indonesia, Tanaka and Yamamoto (2021) find that extended families provide support but can also create overcrowding and inconsistent discipline, leading to delinquency. Similarly, Owusu and Mensah (2022) in Ghana reveal that children from broken homes show higher involvement in gangs and truancy, with maternal absence proving more disruptive than paternal absence. These comparative insights suggest that while certain family dynamics exert universal effects, local socio-cultural environments mediate outcomes.

Taken together, these studies confirm the centrality of family structure in shaping juvenile delinquency but reveal several limitations. First, much of the Kenyan research is urban-centric, overlooking the specific challenges of rural sub-counties like Loitoktok, where polygamy, extended families, and pastoralist livelihoods predominate. Second, few studies adequately integrate cultural practices, socio-economic hardships, and family dynamics into a holistic framework, resulting in fragmented analyses. Third, international literature, while insightful, cannot simply be transplanted into the Kenyan rural context without accounting for local nuances.

Therefore, there remains a critical research gap in understanding how diverse family structures—including single-parent, extended, and polygamous households—

interact with socio-economic and cultural realities to influence juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County. Addressing this gap will not only extend academic knowledge but also inform locally tailored interventions aimed at strengthening family environments and reducing youth crime.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional design, which involves collecting data from a population at a single point in time. Such a design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the examination of the prevalence and relationships between family-related variables—such as neglect, conflict, structure, and substance abuse—and juvenile delinquency. By combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques, the study captured not only statistical associations but also rich narratives from participants. Structured questionnaires provided measurable data, while interviews and document reviews offered deeper contextual insights. This design thus enhanced both the breadth and depth of analysis, yielding a comprehensive picture of how family dynamics contribute to delinquent behavior in Loitoktok Sub-County (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Study Site

The research was conducted in Loitoktok Sub-County, Kajiado County, situated near the Kenya–Tanzania border. The sub-county consists of five administrative wards: Kuku, Kimana, Entonet/Lenkism, Rombo, and Imbirikani/Eselekei. Loitoktok was selected purposefully due to rising concerns over youth crime, substance abuse, school dropout, and deviant behavior. Local reports highlight a sharp increase in drug use—estimated at 40% between 2015 and 2018—alongside an escalation in juvenile court cases. Additionally, the area is undergoing rapid socio-economic and cultural changes, partly due to its location along major transit routes connecting Nairobi and Tanzania. These transitions have contributed to weakened family structures, increased single-parent households, and reduced supervision of minors, thereby providing a relevant context for studying how family environments shape juvenile delinquency.

3.3 Study Population

The study targeted juveniles aged 10–17 years who had been in conflict with the law and formally processed through the Loitoktok Law Courts. Their parents or guardians also formed part of the population, together with

probation officers, children's officers, and magistrates as key informants. According to aggregated records from the Department of Children Services, Probation Office, and Court registries, approximately 1,200 juvenile cases had been documented over the past five years, forming the accessible population.

3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The accessible population was 1,200 juveniles. Using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was 170. However, the final sample comprised 150 juveniles, complemented by purposively selected parents, probation officers, a magistrate, and a children's officer. This multi-stage sampling combined census, purposive, and snowballing techniques. Census sampling was applied to juveniles documented in official records, ensuring inclusivity across all five wards. Purposive sampling targeted parents for focus group discussions (FGDs), and officers and magistrates for key informant interviews, while snowballing helped reach guardians in rural or hard-to-access areas. In total, the study engaged 150 juveniles, 16 parents, 2 probation officers, 1 children's officer, and 1 magistrate.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

A mixed-methods approach guided data collection. For the quantitative component, structured questionnaires were administered to juveniles. These contained closed-ended items organized into sections covering demographic profiles, neglect, family conflict, substance use, and communication patterns. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, allowing systematic coding and statistical analysis.

The qualitative strand employed semi-structured interviews with parents and key informants, enabling open exploration of family dynamics and caregiving challenges. Document analysis further supplemented data, drawing on official records from probation offices and children's departments. The triangulation of these tools increased the validity and richness of findings.

Pretesting, Validity, and Reliability

Before the main study, a pretest was conducted on 10% of the sample in Ngong, Kajiado County, which shares socio-economic characteristics with Loitoktok. This exercise identified ambiguous items and logistical challenges, which were addressed before the actual data collection.

Validity was ensured through expert review, where supervisors and subject specialists assessed the instruments for relevance, clarity, and alignment with research objectives. Content validity was further enhanced by structuring the tools around core study variables.

Reliability was tested through a pilot study using the test-retest method, where instruments were administered twice to the same group of respondents. Responses were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of 0.7 confirming acceptable reliability levels. These procedures ensured that the tools consistently captured accurate data.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitative data were coded, cleaned, and analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, summarized key variables, while inferential tests—such as chi-square and regression—explored associations between family-related factors and delinquent behavior.

For qualitative data, interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo version 12. A deductive thematic analysis was employed, guided by theoretical frameworks, to identify recurring patterns and themes. Integration of findings from both strands allowed for a holistic interpretation, with results presented through tables, figures, and narrative accounts.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Given the involvement of minors (10–17 years), ethical safeguards were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and assent from the juveniles themselves. Participants were assured of confidentiality, with identifiers replaced by codes or pseudonyms. Sensitive questions regarding family conflict or neglect were carefully phrased, and respondents were informed of their right to skip questions or withdraw without consequence.

To minimize psychological distress, interviews were conducted respectfully, with participants given control over the disclosure of personal experiences. Data were used solely for academic purposes, and only aggregated findings were reported to prevent traceability. These measures upheld ethical standards of respect, beneficence, and justice, ensuring the well-being and dignity of all participants.

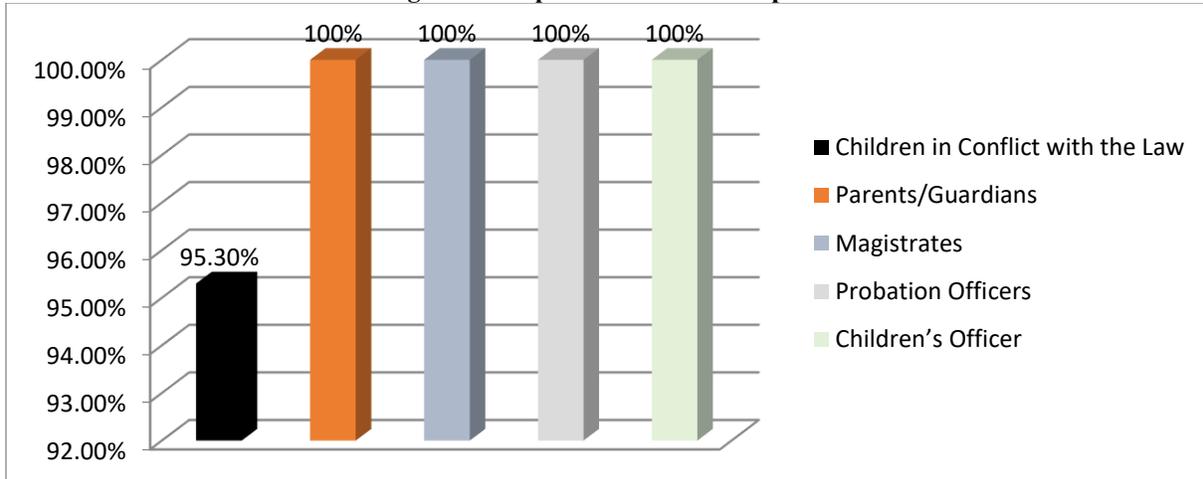
4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

Out of the targeted 170 participants, comprising 150 children in conflict with the law and 16 parents or guardians, a total of 163 individuals participated in the study, resulting in a commendable response rate of 93.3%

for juveniles and 100% for parents and duty bearers particularly: probation officers, magistrate and Children’s Officer.

Figure 1: Response Rate of Participants



A response rate of over 95% is considered very good and sufficient to enhance the validity and reliability of the study findings. This high response rate was considered adequate to ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings. It also provided sufficient data to achieve thematic saturation in both the qualitative and quantitative components of the research, thereby enhancing the richness and depth of the analysis.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section highlights the age, gender, education level, and family background of both juveniles and their parents/guardians. The data were essential in contextualizing juvenile behavior within familial and socio-economic conditions.

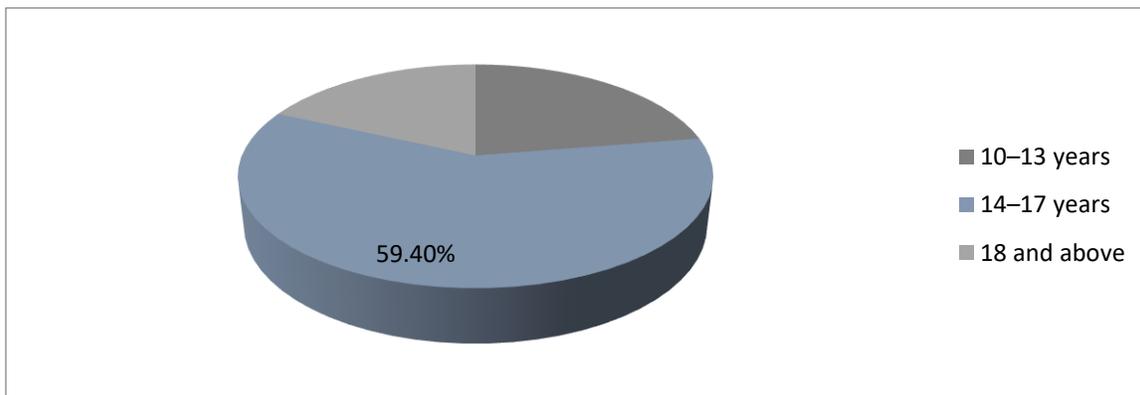


Figure 2: age of Juvenile Respondents

The study found that the largest proportion of juvenile offenders in Loitoktok Sub-County were aged 14–17 years (59.4%), followed by those aged 10–13 years (22.4%) and 18 years and above (18.2%). This indicates that mid- to late adolescence is the most vulnerable period for engaging in delinquent behavior. This aligns with findings by Moffitt (2018), who noted that adolescence is a developmental stage marked by heightened risk-taking and susceptibility

to peer influence. The relatively high involvement of 14–17-year-olds could be attributed to increased autonomy from parents, coupled with a yet-undeveloped capacity for long-term decision-making. For the current study, this suggests that preventive interventions within the family environment need to focus heavily on early adolescence, before youths enter the 14–17-year range. Parents and guardians should receive training in monitoring, open communication, and constructive discipline during this

critical stage. Additionally, community-based programs targeting family-teen relationships could help curb delinquency before it peaks. Early parental engagement in

schooling and after-school activities could also mitigate the progression into more severe offenses.

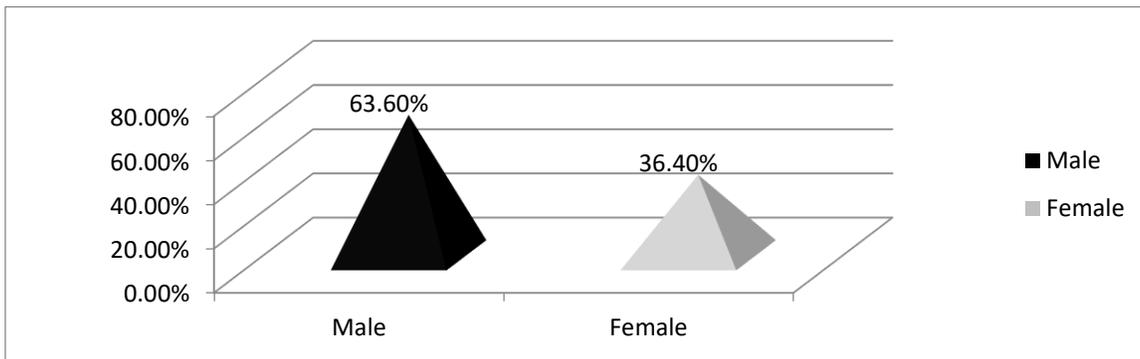


Figure 3: Gender of Juvenile Respondents

The data shows that males make up the majority of juvenile offenders at 63.6%, while females account for 36.4%. This gender gap is consistent with criminological research, which indicates that boys are more likely than girls to engage in risk-taking and aggressive behaviors due to both biological and socio-cultural factors (Jennings et al., 2019). Social expectations in Loitoktok may also encourage boys to adopt more dominant or rebellious behaviors, while girls might face stricter supervision within the family environment. This gender disparity implies that the family

environment may play a different role in shaping delinquent behavior among boys compared to girls. For boys, ineffective supervision, lack of positive male role models, and exposure to aggressive conflict resolution in the family could exacerbate delinquent tendencies. For girls, delinquency may be more related to neglect, emotional abuse, or escape from unsafe home environments. Thus, family interventions should be gender-responsive focusing on role modeling, mentorship, and healthy masculinity for boys, while addressing emotional support and protection for girls.

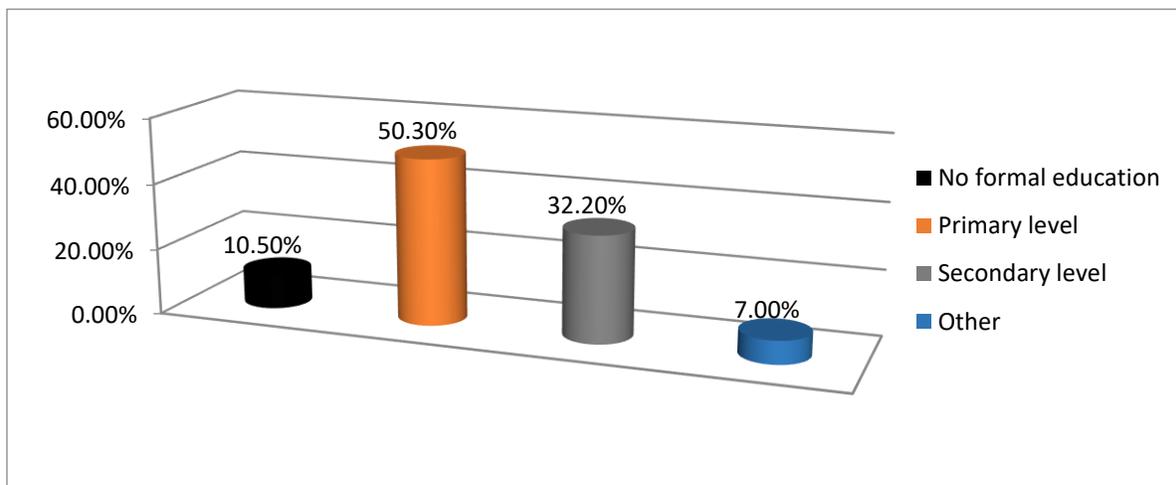


Figure 4: Education Level of Juvenile Respondents

A significant proportion of juvenile offenders had attained only primary education (50.3%), followed by those with secondary education (32.2%), no formal education (10.5%), and other education (7.0%). The predominance of low educational attainment mirrors the findings of Henry et al. (2018), who link poor school performance and school

dropout to higher risks of delinquency. In Loitoktok, this could be compounded by family environments that fail to prioritize education due to economic pressures, cultural values, or parental illiteracy. Educational status serves both

as an indicator of socio-economic background and as a potential protective factor against delinquency. Families that value and support education by providing learning materials, encouraging attendance, and engaging with teachers can shield youths from delinquent influences. Conversely, where the family fails to provide academic

encouragement, juveniles may disengage from school and become more susceptible to antisocial peer groups. The study therefore highlights the need for parental training on the importance of education as part of crime prevention strategies.

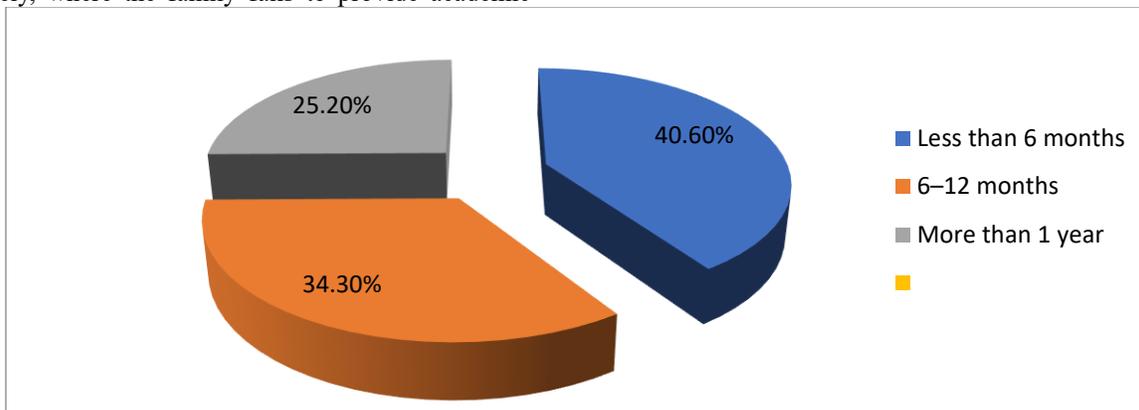


Figure 5: Detention Duration of Juvenile Respondents

Regarding time spent in detention, 40.6% had been detained for less than 6 months, 34.3% for 6–12 months, and 25.2% for more than a year. This variation may reflect both the severity of offenses and the effectiveness of rehabilitation interventions. Longer detention periods could also suggest more serious offenses or repeated offending linked to unresolved family issues. The study indicates that family environment factors not only influence the onset of delinquency but may also affect the likelihood of recidivism. Juveniles detained for longer periods might have come from families with chronic dysfunction, including neglect, abuse, or absence of supportive figures. Therefore, post-release interventions should include family counseling and structured home

reintegration programs to rebuild trust, address root causes, and support behavior change. Shorter detentions should be coupled with community-based family therapy to prevent escalation into more serious offenses.

4.3 Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency

This section presents findings related to the third objective of the study: To examine the contributions of family structure on juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County. Understanding how these dynamics influence juvenile behavior is essential in addressing the root causes of delinquency among youths.

Table 3: Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
I grew up in a single-parent household.	18 (12.6%)	22 (15.4%)	16 (11.2%)	49 (34.3%)	38 (26.6%)	3.47	1.34
I was raised by relatives or guardians instead of my biological parents.	25 (17.5%)	29 (20.3%)	19 (13.3%)	41 (28.7%)	29 (20.3%)	3.14	1.38
The absence of one or both parents affected my behavior.	10 (7.0%)	17 (11.9%)	12 (8.4%)	52 (36.4%)	52 (36.4%)	3.83	1.25
I lacked a stable home environment while growing up.	15 (10.5%)	20 (14.0%)	14 (9.8%)	50 (35.0%)	44 (30.8%)	3.61	1.31
The way my family was structured contributed to my involvement in delinquent activities.	14 (9.8%)	19 (13.3%)	17 (11.9%)	53 (37.1%)	40 (28.0%)	3.59	1.28

The study findings underscore the critical role of family structure in shaping juvenile behavior in Loitoktok Sub-County. A notable proportion of respondents (60.9%) reported being raised in single-parent households, with a mean of 3.47 (SD = 1.34), suggesting that single-parenting is prevalent among juveniles in conflict with the law and may significantly influence behavioral outcomes. Additionally, 49% indicated that they were raised by relatives or guardians rather than biological parents, with a mean of 3.14 (SD = 1.38), highlighting the prominence of non-traditional caregiving arrangements, though with greater variability in responses.

Parental absence emerged as a central factor, with 72.8% of juveniles agreeing that the lack of one or both parents affected their behavior (mean = 3.83, SD = 1.25). This reflects a strong consensus that absence of parental guidance contributes to delinquent tendencies. Similarly, 65.8% acknowledged lacking a stable home environment (mean = 3.61, SD = 1.31), reinforcing the association between family instability and the development of negative behavioral patterns.

Overall, 65.1% of respondents explicitly attributed their involvement in delinquent activities to the structure of their families (mean = 3.59, SD = 1.28). These findings reveal that unstable, disrupted, or non-traditional family arrangements significantly shape juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok.

Parent/Guardian Responses on Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency

Qualitative findings from interviews with parents and guardians revealed that family structure significantly influences juvenile behavior. Many participants acknowledged that the presence, absence, or multiplicity of caregivers shapes a child's discipline and decision-making. One parent from a single-parent household shared the difficulties of raising a child alone:

"I come from a single-parent household, and sometimes it's difficult to control the boy on my own; he lacks a father figure to guide him" (Parent 1, personal communication, June 2025).

A respondent from an extended family structure highlighted the confusion children face due to inconsistent authority:

"We live in an extended family, and though there is support, the many voices confuse the child—he sometimes doesn't know who to listen to" (Parent 2, personal communication, June 2025).

In contrast, a parent from a nuclear family emphasized the benefits of co-parenting:

"Having both parents around has helped maintain discipline, even though we still face

challenges" (Parent 3, personal communication, June 2025).

When asked about behavioral differences observed among children from various family structures, several parents reported notable patterns. One guardian remarked:

"Children from stable two-parent homes seem more obedient and focused, while those from broken homes tend to act out or skip school" (Parent 4, personal communication, June 2025).

Another added:

"Boys raised by single mothers often fall into peer pressure easily—they look for male role models elsewhere, sometimes in the wrong places" (Parent 5, personal communication, June 2025).

A respondent reflecting on children raised by relatives noted:

"Children raised by grandparents or aunts tend to be either much disciplined or very rebellious depending on how strict or lenient the guardians are" (Parent 6, personal communication, June 2025).

These narratives demonstrate that both the absence of a parental figure and the presence of multiple and substitute guardians can create behavioral uncertainty, increasing the likelihood of juvenile delinquency depending on the child's context and level of supervision.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study established that family structure significantly influences juvenile delinquency in Loitoktok Sub-County. Most juvenile offenders came from single-parent households, extended families, or were raised by guardians, indicating that non-nuclear arrangements often correlate with delinquent behavior. Adolescents aged 14–17 years were the most vulnerable, with male juveniles disproportionately represented compared to females. Low educational attainment further heightened susceptibility to delinquency, particularly when combined with unstable home environments. Both quantitative and qualitative findings underscore that parental absence, inconsistent authority, and lack of emotional or educational support create conditions that predispose children to conflict with the law. These findings affirm that strengthening family stability and support systems is critical to reducing delinquency and fostering positive youth development.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Parental Capacity Building: Government agencies, NGOs, and local leaders should organize training programs for parents and

- guardians on effective child-rearing, open communication, and conflict resolution.
2. Early Adolescence Interventions: Schools and community organizations should develop preventive programs targeting ages 10–13, with mentorship, peer support, and extracurricular activities to reduce vulnerability before the 14–17 peak stage.
 3. Gender-Responsive Programs: Tailored interventions should address male juvenile risk-taking through mentorship and healthy masculinity models, while also enhancing emotional support and protection for girls.
 4. Educational Support: Families, schools, and county authorities should collaborate to promote school attendance by providing learning materials, bursaries, and after-school programs that shield youths from antisocial influences.
 5. Rehabilitation and Reintegration: The probation service, judiciary, and Children’s Department should couple detention with structured family counseling and reintegration programs to address root causes and reduce recidivism.
 6. Community Engagement: Faith-based organizations, elders, and local institutions should support collective responsibility for at-risk youth, creating alternative role models and safe spaces for guidance.

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