

Media Representation of Violent Teen Gangs: Effects on Non-Gang Youth

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Date of Submission: 04-01-2023 Date of Acceptance: 13-08-2025 Date of Publication: 24-03-2026</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Deviant behaviour, Media Representation, Labelling, Gang Culture, Non-gang Youth.</p>	<p><i>The recent growth in teen gangs has sparked the interest of people from all aspects of society, including politicians, academics, law enforcement organizations, and legislators. Primarily, juvenile gangs start with peer groups, but eventually are recognized as engaging in a variety of unlawful activities. This fact raises suspicion about the non-gang peer groups and their members in the same neighbourhood as being involved in those activities as well. While the media highlights teen gangs to comprehend the situation and gives us vital information, it does tend to present these youngsters horribly. When we focus on teen gangs, we disregard the non-gang members who coexist with them. As a result of the constant labelling they receive from the media, individuals are vulnerable to a range of difficulties. The purpose of this study is to identify the problems that these non-gang teenagers experience, as well as the qualities that predispose them to these problems, in light of Howard Becker's labelling theory. The paper's methodology is qualitative, and the method is a semi-structured interview. People's viewpoints are influenced by their spatial surroundings, gender, and socioeconomic position. A few teens appeared to have encountered more serious problems than others. If these problems are not addressed, more teens might retaliate. Both parents and society need to come forward and healthily address these problems. Law enforcement groups can conduct seminars for teenagers to teach them about gangs and their destructive implications.</i></p>

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Introduction

Youth gangs have been spreading disorder across several areas, both within and beyond the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka, since 2017 (Mamun, 2019). In recent years, the news has been relentlessly covered by the media, which has undoubtedly caused significant concern among the general public. The recurring violence and the colorful portrayal of our new generation have forced everyone to pause and reflect on our younger generation's upbringing and future. Obviously, every story may be told from two different points of view. The violence mentioned in the news also affects the daily lives of other teenagers. Hence, the non-gang teenagers also face consequences for the conduct of their gang counterparts' deeds.

Gang culture is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh. Local teenagers forming gangs to exert control over areas became common in the late 1980s. Gangs were typically formed by slum-dwelling youths who were followers and musclemen for various political parties. The majority of these gangs' members were street kids. They were involved in everything from drug smuggling to carrying firearms and extorting money. These kids were merely subordinates to the genuine gang members at the top of the gang hierarchy (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2015). In comparison, gang activities have shifted the landscape, become more prevalent, and thus prompted us to re-evaluate gang culture in recent years. In addition to slum dwellers and street children, school and college-aged teenagers have been observed engaging in such activities.

Operational definitions of Teen and Youth

The study focuses on adolescents, where the terms 'teen' and 'youth' form focal points of the subject matter while discussing teen gangs.

Adolescence and Youth

Adolescence is the transitional phase of life between childhood and adulthood. Any individual between the ages of 10 and 19 is considered an adolescent, and between the ages of 15 and 24, a youth, according to the definitions of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN). The adolescent stage is further divided into two parts:

1. Early adolescence: ages 10–14 years
2. Late adolescence: ages 15–19 years (WHO, 2019)

Bangladesh passed the Children's Act of 1974 to safeguard children's rights. The Children's Act 2013, which repeals the 1974 Children's Act, defines a child offender as a child who is in "conflict with the law". Under this law, any person under 18 is considered a child. On the other hand, the Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006 defines an adolescent as *any person* aged 14 or older but under 18 (Section 8).

Teen

The term ‘teen’ is used synonymously with adolescence. It is a stage when a child transforms and acquires a new dimension in their behaviour and attitude. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers this stage a significant period in a child’s development, encompassing the physical, psychological, and social domains.

Teen gangs

According to Rabbi (2019), most members of gang groups in Bangladesh range in age from 14 to 19. However, during this study, the authors specifically included persons aged 16-19. The study refers to such groups as teen gangs and found that at least 50-60 gangs are active in Dhaka city. Teen gangs, which form primarily as peer groups that later become involved in a variety of criminal activities, are a significant concern.

Individuals from various communities have their own cultures. Similarly, gang members exhibit a typical pattern of conduct. Some gang members carry knives or blades. A few groups are involved in mugging, eve-teasing, drug dealing and abuse, and even murder (Jani, 2017). ‘Deadly Teen Gangs’, ‘Menace of Teen Gangs,’ and other gang names may reflect, to an extent, how dangerous they are. It is a concern for the young generation and their families.

Despite this, the vast majority of youths are not members of gangs. Scholarly works pay little attention to the non-gang counterparts and primarily focus on the teen gangs. They analyse how these gangs emerge and who is most likely to join them. This type of information creates a widespread problem by shaping our perception of the youth generation. The study aims to determine how media portrayal of teen gangs and society’s changing attitudes toward teenagers affect non-gang youth, whether they experience challenges, and whether these effects vary by gender or social status.

Rationale of the Research

The culture of teen gangs has been the subject of much controversy and discussion. Teenagers who are not members of a gang, on the other hand, receive less attention. They require just as much attention as the gangs themselves for the problems they face or the influence they are subject to due to the headlines about young gang culture in the media. The news we get from the media shapes how society characterizes a gang member. There is thus a risk of misjudging non-gang youngsters based on those criteria. We can also see from scholarly works that youth from certain groups are more closely labelled as gang members even without any involvement. In the study “The Violent Gang Problem in Chicago: A Local Community Approach,” Spergel (1986) found that minority male youths were responsible for most of the delinquent and violent offending. According to the 2008 survey of the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS), Hispanic youth make up almost 50% of all gang members, African American 32%, and Caucasian 11% (National Gang Centre,

2010). Esbensen, Peterson, Tylor & Freng (2010) in their book “Youth Violence: Sex and Race Differences in Offending, Victimization, and Gang Membership” found that in a 15-city sample of self-reporting youth from the USA, the proportion of gang membership was 7.3% for whites, 8.3% for blacks, 9 % for Hispanics and 12.9% for multiracial groups. They also showed that 7.8% of girls were members of gangs, whereas 8.8% of boys were members (Esbensen et. al., 2010). These survey results show that some groups of youth are more prone to becoming gang members. However, defining these characteristics of gang members labels other youngsters who share similar demographic characteristics.

Review of Literature

Being labelled a gang member carries a negative connotation. It has a significant impact on the youths who receive the label and on our perception of who is deviant. Masiello (2006), in her thesis “Labelling and Deviance: Fraternities and Gangs,” noted that labelling can shape who we consider deviant. The gang label carries a negative connotation, making it seem more deviant. On the other hand, fraternities are not considered as deviant as gangs. She argued that there is a socioeconomic factor to it as well. According to her, the gangs often consist of members from poverty-stricken areas, but fraternities have the privilege of their class. She incorporated the idea by discussing William Chambliss’ essay “The Saints and the Roughnecks. “The Saints, a group of upper-middle-class boys, despite committing the same offenses as Roughnecks, got away with their acts. The same may be said of the other criteria, such as respondents’ gender and socioeconomic class.

On the other hand, the Roughnecks, a group of boys from a lower social class, were unable to (Chambliss, 1973). Masiello (2006) explained that there was a bias, and the same bias applies to fraternities and gangs. According to her, society creates these labels, decides who is to be labelled, and these labels also imply who gets away with crime. She inferred some similarities between gangs and fraternities, starting with defining their activities, identifiable names, symbols, and signals. For example, fraternities are a group of people who form alliances and participate in illegal activities that are harmful to society, which is quite similar to the legal definition of gangs. Still, gangs are labelled and targeted, whereas fraternities get away with their illegal activities.

The impact of labelling can also be seen in the juvenile justice system. Quinn (2010) discussed how the label of gang membership influences decision-making in various stages of the juvenile justice system. She analysed three stages, namely Intake, Disposition, and Incarceration. These three stages determine whether there is any relationship between the gang membership label and decisions in the juvenile justice system. According to her findings, offenders with the gang member label were more likely to receive a recommendation for judicial proceedings, though it varied by county. In Dade County, 87% more gang members received a recommendation for judicial proceedings than non-gang members. In Volusia

County, no significant relationships were found. In the disposition stage, the scenario proved different. In Dade County, there were no significant relationships between gang membership labels and recommendations for disposition. However, in Volusia County, offenders with gang membership labels received an incarceration recommendation 2.85 times more than non-gang members. In the incarceration release stage, gang members were incarcerated for 15 days longer than non-gang members. Among the five findings of the research, three findings supported that gang membership increased the severity of the recommendation and incarceration period. Quinn (2010) has explained some implications of these. According to her, labelling in these stages can have both short-term and long-term effects on offenders. Some effects include strengthening of the label, increased contact with offenders due to long-term incarceration, recidivism or secondary deviance, blocked access to conventional opportunities, and so on (Quinn, 2010). It reflects how influential a label can be in our society.

Now, if we review some of the news articles published during the upsurge of teen gangs in Bangladesh, we can see how they played a role in labelling the teens. A leading Bangladeshi news portal, The Daily Star, published an article, written by Saad & Rahman (2020), titled “Teen Gang Culture: Too dangerous to be ignored,” which mentioned some areas as having the most teen gang activities.

“They (teen gangs) operate in areas including Uttara, Turag, Khilgaon, Dakshin Khan, Tongi, Sutrapur, Demra, Sabujbagh, Khilkhet, Kotwali, Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Agargaon and Hatirjheel, according to law enforcers (Saad & Rahman, 2020)”.

As mentioned before, some of the activities of teen gangs are common to any teen group. It was complicated to identify which teens were members of teen gangs and who were not. So, it put them under suspicion for almost all the teens residing in these areas who had any similarities to gang activity. Another online news portal, The Financial Express (2020), titled one of its articles “Teen-gangs in Dhaka: How close you live to them!”, while mentioning the most affected areas of gang activity. The title creates a fear among the residents of the mentioned areas that the gang members are very near and among the teens near them. In another news article from the New Age published in October 2020, it was reported that in a crackdown in Rajshahi, police arrested 400 teenagers. Among them, 300 were later released, while others were charged with different crimes (Mahmud, 2020). They neither clarified the circumstances of the arrest and the release of the 300 teenagers, nor the gravity of those charges. However, what they did was create a notion that all these teens were violent gang members and were involved in various kinds of serious crimes.

If false charges are made against the non-gang youngsters, they may counterattack. The teenage years are a challenging time in one’s life. Any traumatic event can affect how people grow up and perceive the world. It is crucial to pay attention to

these youngsters who are not gang members but are subject to societal shame. The goal of this research is to shed some light on the topic.

Research Questions

In this study, the following question will be addressed:

How do youngsters feel about the media's portrayal of gangs, and whether there is any influence of the media's labelling?

Theoretical Context

The principles of labelling theory have significantly influenced this research. Essentially, labelling theory concerns the interaction between the labeller and the individual who is labelled. This idea was used better to explain the relationships between teens and other people, and how these interactions lead to the labelling of non-gang youth.

Labelling Theory

The sociological theory of symbolic interactionism can be traced back to the origins of labelling theory. It was popularized in 1963 by Howard Becker's work "Outsiders". According to labelling theorists, everyone is prone to minor rule violations. Nonetheless, the reaction of those in positions of authority to the initial rule-breaking can impact the likelihood of future big rule-breaking or crimes. In other words, when the people in power identify *Anyone* as a criminal, it becomes a crime. Furthermore, the person who engages in such behaviour is seen as a criminal. Gradually, that person internalizes the label and begins to act on it (Bernburg, 2009).

Cooley's (1902) concept of the "looking-glass self" can help explain how labelling works. According to this theory, a person constructs a self-image based on how others perceive him. He acts on the impression he generated over time, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy (Cooley, 1902).

Lemert (1951, 1967) explained labelling in terms of primary and secondary deviation. According to him, most young people engage in minor or primary deviation. When they are caught in the act of primary deviance, they are socially ostracized. The kids then take this stigma as their identity and act according to it to live up to it. It leads to subsequent transgression and worse societal repercussions.

However, several circumstances bolster these classifications. As Garfinkel (1956) found, the impact can be more pronounced when labelling occurs in the public sphere. The family also serves as an essential catalyst for the transition from labelling to secondary deviance.

Howard Becker's view of labels

Becker (1963) split society into two groups: dominant and subservient. Because the dominant group wields all authority, it can determine what constitutes aberrant behaviour. Deviance is a term they use to describe any action that puts their position in jeopardy. The subservient group is usually at the receiving end of this label.

In his book, Becker (1963) examined various categories of deviants.

- Conformers: do not engage in deviant behaviour.
- Pure deviants are those who engage in abnormal behaviour and are branded as such.
- Falsely accused: They are falsely charged because they do not do weird activities, yet are labelled deviants.
- Secret deviants are those who engage in deviant behaviour without being labelled as such.

Labelling has ramifications for both pure deviants and unfairly accused people. In cases of pure deviants, the label is reinforced, leading to serious crimes. Moreover, for those who have been wrongfully charged, these labels disrupt their lives even though they are not deviants. False charges may result in retaliation. However, according to Becker (1963), not all labels impact youth; only the dominant label does. He referred to it as “master status.” If a person’s master position is deviant, he begins to internalize the term. It alters his perception of himself or any other title he has.

Labelling Theory and Non-Gang Youth

The teenage gang phenomenon has been portrayed in the news as a growing concern in our society. Although there is much evidence of problematic children, most of them are not in gangs. According to Lemert (1967), most people break the law or commit deviant acts at some point in their lives; however, these acts are not severe enough to classify the individual as a criminal in society’s eyes. It is also significantly found in our culture. Most teenagers break a few rules, but not all are members of deadly gangs, as the media portrays them to be. The news media, on the other hand, has a massive impact on our societal thinking. Except for some violent qualities, many non-gang youths fit the criteria of youth gangs. The authors of the news articles use dramatic headlines such as “Bangladesh’s deadly ‘teen gang’ culture,” “The menace of teenage gangs,” etc. and in the news, they cover how the teenagers who work at tea shops, grocery stores, markets, and offices get involved in crimes as serious as murder, how they meet up in social gatherings (Mamun, 2019). These are common in most teenagers in our society. This news creates widespread fear among teens.

We were constantly surrounded by people hanging out in groups, playing games (both online and offline), or breaching minor rules. However, they are increasingly connected with the more ominous and unfriendly term “gang.” The procedure of labelling non-gang youth is depicted in the flowchart below;

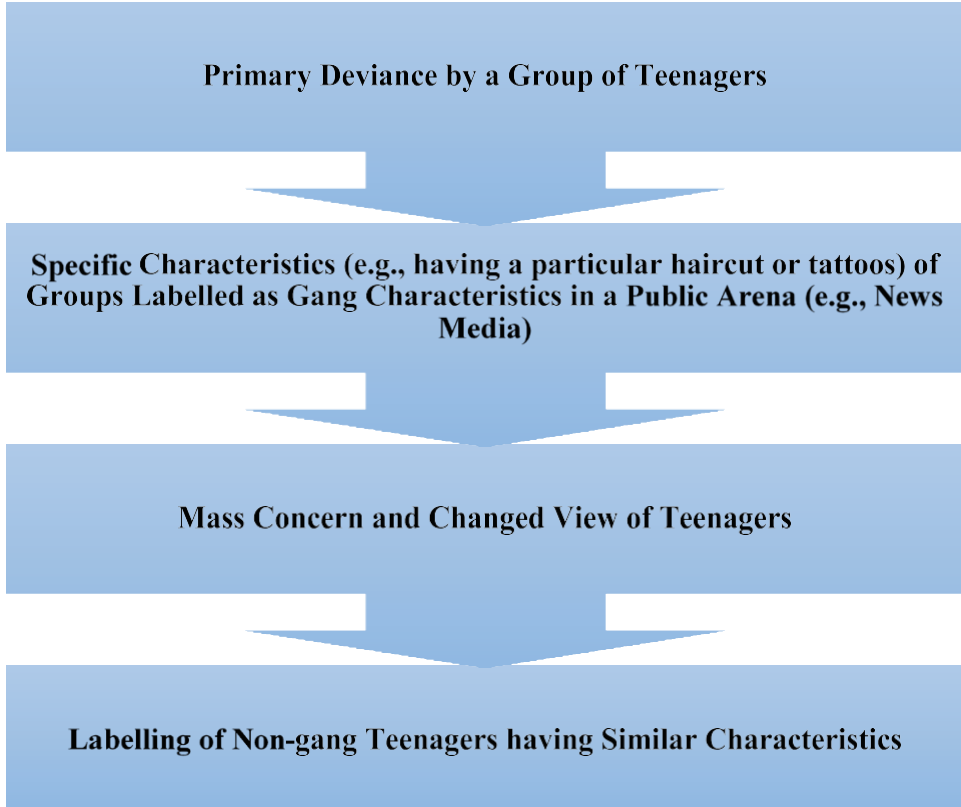


Figure 1: Labelling Process of the Non-gang Teenagers (Author’s creation, 2025).

As a result, portraying youngsters as potential gang members alters our perceptions of them and how we interact with them. Furthermore, instances of parents being unaware that their children are members of gangs instil fear in the guardians. People are becoming increasingly concerned about what teenagers are doing, where they are going, and with whom they are spending time. These disparities in the treatment of kids might make them feel stigmatized and watched. This stigmatization might lead to additional labelling and its detrimental effects. It may cause people to change their self-image, affect their familial and social lives, and result in revenge.

Methodology of the paper

This research is exploratory and follows a thematic approach to investigate the effects of teen gang media representation on non-gang teenagers. Given the nature of the investigation, a qualitative approach was adopted.

Sampling Method

The respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Though a few drawbacks were encountered in using this method, it was resorted to during the pandemic to document the teens' apprehension in the best possible way. In purposive sampling, the sample was selected based on the study's stated goals and was intended to be representative of the traits or qualities the researchers were particularly interested in. As this study concerns teens in a specific age range, purposive sampling was used. Samples were selected to provide maximum variation in terms of locations, gender, and socioeconomic class of the population. Some respondents were purposively selected from areas reported to have more teen gangs, and others were selected from other locations. In other words, to discover if the areas highlighted in the media had any effect on the labelling. The same may be said of the different criteria, such as respondents' gender and socioeconomic class. Both males and females from all socioeconomic classes were carefully selected to compare their experiences.

The researchers interviewed 28 youths; 19 were male and 09 were female. They were from different areas across the capital, including Khilgaon, Bashabo, Goran, Wari, Motijheel, Siddheswari, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Rampura, and Uttara. The respondents were informed of the study's purpose and consented to participate in the interview.

Data Collection Method

In-depth semi-structured interviews are used to collect data. It helps researchers make sense of their reality through their experiences and expressions. This method was chosen because it allows respondents to discuss their experiences openly.

The questions were only used to make the respondents comfortable first, and then to give them cues so their stories would not get sidetracked. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing social restrictions during the research period, the interviews were conducted online and by phone. A few respondents did not wish to be recorded; their interviews were captured in written notes. The ethical issue was ensured through the respondents' signatures on the written documents, which were summarized based on their interviews. When the analysis reached data saturation, the investigation concluded. Data from the respondents' area was cross-checked with data from other respondents in the same region. The interviews were then analysed and organized into themes.

Data Analysis

A narrative analysis method was employed to analyse the data. The study's goal is to understand whether non-gang adolescents face any problems due to media representations of gang violence. Each respondent has a unique perspective on events, experiences, and a variety of reasons that may influence their perceptions. To understand the experiences and how the teens make sense of those experiences, this procedure was necessary for the analysis.

Many techniques were used in narrative analysis to interpret the narratives produced throughout the study. The narrative analysis enabled the researchers to analyze the respondents' experiences in their own unique way. A deeper understanding of their perspectives can be gained from how they explain their experiences and how they recount their stories. The interview notes were examined to identify instances in which the respondents believed they received different treatment and how they attempted to make sense of it.

Ethical Consideration

During the study, all ethical considerations were considered. The respondents were fully informed of the study's goals and that the data they provided would be utilized solely for academic purposes. The respondents gave their permission for the interviews to be conducted. Confidentiality was rigorously observed. Even their interviews were recorded with numbers instead of their names. The respondents gave researchers verbal consent to use all data from the study's discussions. No personal information of any respondent has been recorded or used except for that which the respondents agreed to disclose. The interview notes and the final paper have been shown to the respective respondents. They had no objection to the information used in this study.

Findings of the Study

In this part, the outcomes of the interviews are discussed. Based on the study questions, this section is divided into several subsections. The researchers looked at how respondents felt about teen gangs, whether they were labelled, and how gender and socioeconomic position influenced that classification.

Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

Table 1: Teenagers' Perception of Media's Representation of Gangs (Field Data, 2020)

Variables	Frequency
Age	
16-17	8
18-19	20
Gender	
Male	19
Female	9
Socioeconomic Status	
Lower Class	6
Middle Class	18
Upper Class	4

The majority of respondents believe the teen gang problem is severe. According to many respondents, the media is accurate. Respondents reported graffiti and gang activity in Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Mirpur, and Uttara. They had some run-ins with gang members. Some interview participants observed teenagers carrying sharp objects, such as knives. Others claimed that they were intimidating to other teenagers. Some witnesses claimed to have witnessed gang members peddling drugs, fighting, and eve-teasing. Only 43% of those polled said they had seen violence. They have, however, heard of the violence through friends and the press.

Other localities, such as Khilgaon, Bashabo, and Motijheel, received varied replies. Some respondents claimed that the media was partially correct because they witnessed graffiti. Other respondents argued that the news overstated the brutality perpetrated by teen gangs. *“Some boys claim to be gang members because they believe it is cool,”* one of the respondents remarked. It gives them a sense of superiority over others. Some teens are more aggressive than others and enjoy picking fights. However, they are not engaged in any criminal activities. One respondent from the Motijheel neighbourhood claimed,

I have seen that colonies are divided into various groups. One can be found in the AGB colony, while others are in the T&T and railway colonies. All these groups, however, are made up of ordinary friends. We quarrel a lot and have disputes, but we never hurt *Anyane* or commit any crimes. (Respondent 3)

It is clear from the comments that their perspectives vary depending on where they live. Respondents from places where the media more frequently mentioned gangs were more cautious and severe about gangs.

If they face any labelling effect

Many interviewees said they had to return home earlier than before (e.g. evening) after hearing about the teen gangs. In addition, they faced restrictions on where they could go and whom they could see. One respondent said, “My parents did not want me to hang out with some of the local boys because they felt those boys were gang members.”

His parents, on the other hand, never witnessed those boys doing anything harmful. When they went outside, some respondents reported issues. One of the respondents mentioned that they had to change their hangout location due to the problems they faced.

When we used to hang out at the field, people used to think that we were gang members as well. They used to fear us. So, we stopped hanging out there. Even now, people keep a close eye on us. They ask various unnecessary questions. This is uncomfortable. (Respondent 23)

Various questions were posed to them. One respondent was compelled to disclose his parents' contact information. Several teens reported being asked to leave.

When we did not leave, the person hurled water at us, forcing us to go. He was worried that we might cause a disturbance, but we were just having fun. (Respondent 12)

One of the interviewees was a member of a biker group, and he said that police had harassed them for no apparent reason. The police came to their shop, where they repaired bikes, and asked various questions without explanation. Nonetheless, other respondents claimed that they had no troubles with family or strangers. However, after hearing about teen gangs, many respondents' parents would accompany them to school, college, or tuition. While several respondents stated that they had no problems, they had heard that their friends were having difficulties.

Respondents from Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Uttara, Mirpur, and Rampura reported experiencing or hearing about such issues more frequently than those from other locations. They were also subjected to more limitations from their families. People in specific neighbourhoods were more vigilant once the media revealed that those areas had more active gangs. Other respondents from different places also had issues. However, it was significantly lower than the number of respondents in the previously stated locations. These differences in treatment show how teens are labelled based on where they live. Other scholars found similar results. Many teens were labelled as gang members because of the area they lived in or the company they kept, or their dressing style, even if there was no evidence of deviance or gang membership (Hagedorn, 1990; Chesney-Lind, Rockhill, Marker, and Reyes, 1994).

Things are, however, better currently, according to the respondents. "Now that there are fewer reports of gangs, we have fewer problems. People are not as concerned as they used to be."

Another aspect affected how others treated them. Younger respondents encountered fewer issues than older ones. The explanation is that, while teen gang news was at its peak, those who responded were younger.

Influence of socioeconomic status

The majority of those polled stated that their socioeconomic background had no bearing on how they were treated. When the researchers asked who they thought was more likely to join a gang, they said guys from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were. They backed up their claim by claiming that the milieu in which lower-class people live makes them vulnerable to such behaviour. A few mentioned the upper and middle classes, but they were in the minority. As one respondent put it,

I do not believe there is a distinct socioeconomic class. Anyone can form a gang. Many boys desire to show that they are more potent than their peers. They have the option to do so because of gangs. They think being in a gang is cool. (Respondent 20)

One of the interviewees, who came from a lower-class family, stated that his socioeconomic status influenced how others regarded him. After hearing about teen gangs on the news, he said that if he stood in front of any building, the caretaker would keep an eye on him or tell him to go somewhere else.

The majority of the people who took part in this interview came from middle-class homes. They did not believe that socioeconomic position influenced their problems. Despite this, their perception of who might be a gang member is not incongruent. They, on the other hand, assigned a higher likelihood of gang membership to adolescents from lower socioeconomic classes. The outcome aligns with Liska's (1987) findings that some people are more likely to be stigmatized, whereas others can more easily avoid labelling. The teens from a working-class background are more likely to get stigmatized than others. It is also seen in William Chambliss' essay, "The Saints and the Roughnecks", which has been discussed before. Several studies, including Aye-Maung's (1995) and McAra & McVie's (2005), showed that working-class teens were usually suspected of deviance. The police often consider them as "permanent suspects" (Aye-Maung, 1995). They also noted that the street environment makes these teens more prone to conflict with authoritative figures (McAra & McVie, 2005).

Influence of Gender

The male respondents in this study felt that their gender played a role in their troubles. They claimed that girls are not seen as a threat. "Girls do not hang out outside as much as boys," one responder stated. Additionally, because they are not generally seen as troublemakers, they have an advantage.

Female membership in gangs was not well-reported, according to several respondents. According to one of the interviewees, girls' involvement in gangs is not reported in the media since they are not directly involved.

They primarily focus on boys, one respondent remarked.
Through their friends or partners, I know some girls who are members of these gangs.

Girls who have gang mates or boyfriends utilize their power to bully others. Some of the female responders also confirmed this. They also stated that they had fewer issues than their male counterparts. As a result, gender affects labelling. Even in literary works, it was clear that males were more vulnerable to being labelled than females. The separate surveys conducted by Spergel (1986) and Esbensen and

colleagues (2010) showed similar patterns: males are reported to be more involved in gangs than females. Cohen (1972) found that young males from working-class backgrounds were often seen as a threat by the public, and the media also targeted them more than they did females. This shows the effect of socioeconomic backgrounds as well.

Discussion

The main pressing problem in studying teen gangs is that there is no fixed definition of such gangs. It is complicated to distinguish gang member teens from non-gang member teens. It is the reason why all teens are looked upon with suspicion. One article outlined signs to identify whether a teen is a gang member. Those signs include different hairstyles and colours, wearing ripped jeans, neck chains, and bracelets, riding a bike with loud noises, smoking in public, and using obscene language (Alam, 2020). If a boy is returning home late or misbehaving with parents for more pocket money, these are also signs of gang membership, according to that article. Such vague and common characteristics left a large part of teens under suspicion. Even a teen with no affiliation with gangs can have different or coloured hairstyles or may start smoking or riding bikes.

The primary goal of this study is to determine whether non-gang youth are subject to any labelling effects due to the media's portrayal of juvenile gangs and the factors that influence this. Teenagers are subjected to labelling, according to the interviews. The living environment of teens significantly influences the problems they face. The importance of location is evident in other literary works as well. Ralphs and his colleagues found that police gave more attention to the areas known for gang activities. Teens living in these areas not only received unwanted attention but also were labelled as gang members or "gang associates" even when they had no connection to the gangs or showed any sign of criminality (Ralphs et al., 2009). Respondents reported being stopped and searched, or even arrested, for false allegations. The researchers found similar results in this study as well. Even if the teens are not involved in any deviant activities, residents in locations described as teen gang hotspots are a matter of concern. The analysis of news published online and offline highlighted areas such as Uttara, Mirpur, and Mohammadpur more than others. Teenagers in these locations are more aware of teen gangs and are subjected to more labelling. People in other regions are also keeping an eye on the teenagers. Teenagers from those communities where teen gang incidents are less reported, on the other hand, had fewer troubles. This discrepancy demonstrates how the media shapes our perceptions.

Respondents also reported that their gender influenced their treatment. The newspapers and online news portals did not mention any female gang activities. This also affected how the teens were treated. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of coverage on female gang activity. At this moment, the media's effect is also visible. Only boys were portrayed as gang members in

the media, and male respondents had more problems than female respondents. Not only gender, but also respondents' age, affects the results. The news mentioned that teens aged were found to be gang members. So, the respondents who were not of the age described in the news had fewer difficulties than those who fell within the mentioned age range.

The impact of socioeconomic position, on the other hand, is contradictory. The majority of those polled stated that socioeconomic background had no bearing on how the teens were treated. However, respondents identified lower-class males as being more likely to join a gang. Though some of the other classes were mentioned, 82% of the respondents believed that lower-class teenagers were more likely to join a gang. So, the socioeconomic background affects labelling.

There are a few limitations of this paper. To begin with, we were facing challenges reaching respondents due to the pandemic. As a result, there are differences between males and females, as well as between respondents from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Another issue is that individuals were hesitant to talk about their experiences. Nonetheless, this study reveals how the media's portrayal of teenagers influenced people's perceptions of them. We can better grasp it if we recollect what Garfinkel (1956) said. According to him, the impact of labelling in the public sphere can be more aggregated. In this case, there is a similar circumstance. According to the media, teen gangs are being formed in the guise of regular peer groups and by average teens. As a result, everyone has become wary of youngsters, even those who are not aberrant. We need to learn more about how these designations harm teenagers' mental health. With this in mind, we must investigate options for resolving the problem before they decide to retaliate. Rather than being on high alert or scared, we should understand teens' needs and communicate with them to prevent them from engaging in unlawful activities. We must provide a safe environment in which they can freely express themselves.

Juvenile Justice System in Bangladesh:

The government of Bangladesh has implemented reformatory punishment in compliance with the Children's Act 2013. It is a significant step in the effort to curb children's illicit activities and a testament to the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of all children. Sections 5 through 15 of the Children's Act 2013 deal with the appointment of Probation Officers, the Child Welfare Board, and the Child Affairs Desk and their duties. Sections 16-43 describe the children's court and its procedures. Sections 44 to 56 deal with legal proceedings, including arrests, investigations, alternative methods, bail, legal representation, and assistance.

There are provisions for child development centres and certified institutions. The Children's Act of 2013 stipulates specific penalties for any child or adolescent guilty of a serious crime. Notwithstanding any other laws, no child may be

sentenced to death, life in prison, or imprisonment, according to Section 33 of the Act. According to Section 34, the juvenile court may impose a term of detention for a child that is not less than three (3) years nor more than ten (10) years if the child is found guilty of a crime that carries a death sentence or a life sentence. According to Section 59, the government must create and maintain the necessary number of Child Development Centres to house, rehabilitate, and support children involved in legal proceedings and under investigation.

A development centre for boys was founded in Tongi, Gazipur, in 1986 under the provisions of the Children's Act of 1974 (now known as the Children's Act 2013). In 1995, a second development centre for boys was constructed in Jessore, and in 2003, one for females was built in Konabari, Gazipur. While these facilities are development centres, their conditions are worse than those in prisons. Therefore, the reformatory punishment mechanism is useless in this situation.

Conclusion

From the findings and debate, non-gang teenagers confront a variety of issues. After analysing the findings, it is evident that a significant number of teenagers are having problems due to the media's portrayal of teen gangs. The media has a considerable influence on how we think about and perceive society. When the mainstream media presents teen groups as dangerous, it impacts our perceptions of them. It has a destructive impact on non-gang adolescents. The media's impacts can be understood by considering key themes such as location, socioeconomic position, and age and gender. The summary of the findings is organized based on the themes below-

As we are determining the media's influence, the areas identified by the media were considered. Teens from locations that were highlighted as having a higher gang presence had more issues than teens from other areas. Our respondents reported that people in these neighbourhoods were harsher in their treatment of the teens.

From analysing the mainstream media during the uprising of teen gangs, we have seen that the media mainly reported the activities of male members of the gangs, leaving their female counterparts. It made people more sceptical of male teens than of female teens. Our findings also showed that male teens faced more societal condemnation.

The media's influence was also evident in how society treated different age groups. The media focused on teens aged 14 to 18. The teens in this age group faced more backlash from society than those in the other age group.

Lastly, the teenagers from low-income families suffer more antagonism than other teenagers. Even youths believe that teens from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds

are more likely to join a gang, because of this, children, parents, and even teenagers themselves are doubtful of one another in our culture. However, many people are unaware that their opinions toward teenagers are changing. Also, we have seen in the literature that teens in other countries face labelling. Quinn's (2010) research, "The Gang Member Label and Juvenile Justice Decision-Making," presented a concerning picture of how teens are treated based on labels in the juvenile justice system. So, a more in-depth discussion of this subject is required not only in Bangladesh but worldwide.

This issue must be addressed through holistic, effective, and practical mechanisms. The problem, however, will not be remedied in a single day. As a result, we must take small steps forward each day to effect change. Regardless, everyone should collaborate. As for solutions to the problem, families, society, and law enforcement should all pay greater attention to youth. In teenagers' lives, family is significant. Parents can have open discussions with their adolescent children regarding teen gangs and how to deal with any issues. They will have a safe space to talk this way. When they face such problems, their parents can assist them.

Moreover, the way we engage teenagers in society needs to be improved in a structured, evidence-based manner. Every community has elders who may organize social activities for teens to participate in efficiently. It will also make it easier for the old and the young to converse more effectively. Teenagers can be assigned limited responsibilities in their various subjects of study. Responsibility and accountability will be taught to children through such programs and mechanisms. In addition, the law enforcement agencies can use community policing to involve youths in the fight against teen gangs. If this problem is not adequately addressed, it may have far-reaching consequences. There has been limited prior research on this topic. This paper will open the way for discussion and resolution of this issue.

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