

## Research on Motivation of Youngsters Involvement in Gang Violence

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### ABSTRACT

Gang violence is still a major issue in most urban and suburban areas with more young people being attracted to gang culture. This study seeks to investigate the underlying reasons for youths' participation in gang activity, emphasizing their attitudes, behavioral patterns, and personal histories. Adopting a mixed-methods research strategy, the study combines quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to offer an in-depth understanding of this social issue. 80 persons aged 15 to 25 were surveyed through structured questionnaires aimed at measuring their gang membership-related perceptions, motivations, and influences. The survey targeted items such as socioeconomic status, family environment, peer influence, perceived advantages of being in a gang (e.g., protection, status, money), and exposure to violence or crime in the community. These surveys yielded statistical evidence about prevalent thinking patterns and actions of youths at risk or already in gangs. For greater analysis, secondary sources were utilized in the form of official crime reports, police data, and open-access social media comments available regarding gang activities. These data were utilized to establish trends, including the increase in gang violence in certain locations, the online expression of gang culture, and the relationship between youth population demographics and gang involvement. Through an analysis of these available data sets, the study was able to place survey results within larger societal and regional trends. In addition, semi-structured interviews were held with a group of young people who were either current or past gang members. These interviews gave rich, narrative-based information on their individual motivations, emotional drivers, and lived experiences of gang life. Areas covered included the emotional draw of gang membership, recruitment experiences, feelings of belonging, fear, loyalty and difficulties in leaving gang life behind. The interviews also elicited commentary on how gang membership has affected their relationships, schooling, and future plans. In conclusion, the findings underscore the need for holistic, early-intervention strategies that address both the structural and emotional dimensions of gang affiliation. Effective prevention should integrate school-based mental health services, community mentorship programs, employment and educational opportunities, and family support initiatives. Policies that deconstruct the perceived benefits of gang membership—

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such as protection, status, and identity—are essential in breaking the cycle of violence and fostering safer, more inclusive communities.

*Keywords: Gang, Violence, Involvement, Youth participation*

**G**ang violence remains one of the central social issues plaguing communities across the world, particularly in cities. Involvement of youths, often adolescents and young adults, in violent gangs is one of the principal causative factors to this condition. There are numerous various and complex reasons that youths join gangs and engage in violent offenses, such as a combination of social, cultural, economic, and individual factors.

Creating effective treatment and prevention strategies depends on understanding the reasons behind youth gang violence. Joining a gang is often decided upon by multiple factors such as the desire for respect, power, identity, and belonging. Because of poor role models, insecure home lives, or limited financial opportunities, many youths are drawn to gangs. At times, gang membership is perceived as a way of promoting one's status or protecting oneself from violence in a violent neighborhood.

Through examining both individual and societal psychological factors, this research aims to explore the underlying reasons why youth join gangs. By exploring personal experiences, emotional triggers, peer pressure, and the role of community dynamics, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that lead to youth's attraction to gang life. In order to create targeted preventive and intervention strategies that address the individual needs and vulnerabilities of vulnerable adolescents and ultimately lead to safer communities and more effective support systems, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of these motivations.

### **DEFINITION**

Gang violence is violent and destructive behavior committed by criminal gang members, frequently to establish control, resolve conflicts, or defend illegal operations and territories. It constitutes a wide variety of violent conduct, ranging from physical attacks, shootings, and stabbings to extortions and intimidation. This violence can be between rival gangs or within a single gang, and it usually reaches out to innocent bystanders or community members who are thought to be a threat or obstacle to gang interests. This violence often reaches out to innocent bystanders or members of the community who are thought to be a threat or block to gang goals, and it may occur between competing gangs or within one gang.

There are some type of motivations are present which are:

- 1. Territorial conflicts:** To gain dominance over specific areas or sites where they might engage in illegal activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, or smuggling, enemy gang violence.
- 2. Defense of illegal businesses:** Gangs can engage in violence in an attempt to protect or expand their illegal operations, including organized crime, drug dealing, or people trafficking.
- 3. Retaliation:** When gang members or non-members fighting each other assault, insult, or otherwise offend another individual, violent acts are perpetrated in retaliation.
- 4. Initiation or enforcement:** Employing violence to enforce discipline and loyalty within the gang.

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Significant societal repercussions, such as community instability, terror, and long-term injury to those engaged, are frequently caused by gang violence. Gang violence persists in many metropolitan areas despite efforts by law enforcement and community organizations to confront and prevent it.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

- **Survey Sample:** 80 People.
- **Surveys:** Quantitative questionnaires to gather data on youngsters' attitudes, motivations, and behaviors with regard to being involved in a gang.
- **Data Analysis:** Secondary analysis of current data, like crime statistics or social media records, to highlight patterns and trends in gang-related violence.
- **Interviews:** interviews for gathering more extensive information on youngsters' motivations and experiences.

#### *Objectives of Study*

1. To identify the primary motivations of youngsters to join gangs and engage in violent behavior.
2. To examine the role of family dynamics, peer pressure, socio economic struggles in youngsters gang violence.

#### *Hypothesis:*

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): Cannot able to identify the main motive of delinquent behavior in gang involvement.
- Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): Main motive of delinquent behavior in gang involvement.

#### *Source of Population:*

Sources are collected from 80 youths in the age group of 18-25 in male population in Chennai.

#### *Selection Criteria:*

The selection criteria done on the age group between 18-25 in male people in Chennai.

#### **Inclusion Criteria:**

- Age between 18 and 25 years
- Regular gang involvement.
- Frequent public nuisance, Gang fights.
- Delinquent behavior.

#### **Exclusion Criteria:**

- People without delinquent behavior.
- Incomplete responses.
- No regular access to gang involvement.

#### *Participants:*

Samples are collected from 80 youths at the age group between 18-25 at the male population.

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**Tools and Techniques:** Data evaluation was conducted applying IDM SPSS statistics. Frequency, co-relation, cross tabulation was computed as part of the descriptive statistical procedure. To examine the primary motivations of youngsters to join gangs and engage in violent behavior and to examine the role of family dynamics, peer pressure, socioeconomic struggles in youngsters gang violence.

### CORRELATIONS POSITIVE ROLE MODEL VS GANG GIVES PROTECTION FROM HARM

		Positive role model regarding gang involvement	Being member in gang gives protection from harm
Positive role model regarding gang involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	80	80
Being member in gang gives protection from harm	Pearson Correlation	.364**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	80	80

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between "Positive role model regarding gang involvement" and "Being a member in a gang gives protection from harm" is 0.364, which indicates a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that individuals who view gang involvement as being influenced by positive role models are more likely to believe that being part of a gang provides protection from harm. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p = 0.001$ ), indicating a strong likelihood that this relationship is not due to chance.

### CORRELATIONS GANG GIVES RESPECT vs GANG GIVES SAFETY

		Does being with gang gives respect	Feeling safe with gang
Does being with gives respect	Pearson Correlation	1	.664**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	80	80
Feeling safe with gang	Pearson Correlation	.664**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	80	80

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between "Does being with a gang give respect" and "Feeling safe with the gang" is 0.664, which indicates a strong positive relationship. This suggests that individuals who feel that being with a gang gives them respect are more likely to also feel safe with the gang. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p = 0.000$ ), meaning this relationship is highly unlikely to be due to chance.

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### EMOTIONS WHEN THINKING ABOUT GANG INVOLVEMENT

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
power	9	11.3	11.3	11.3
fear	16	20.0	20.0	31.3
respect	12	15.0	15.0	46.3
anger	7	8.8	8.8	55.0
pride	3	3.8	3.8	58.8
regret	6	7.5	7.5	66.3
excitement	3	3.8	3.8	70.0
all the above	11	13.8	13.8	83.8
none of the above	13	16.3	16.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This table shows feelings experienced with some frequency. Most commonly reported are fear (20%) and respect (15%), followed by power (11.3%) and "all the above" (13.8%). Lower percentages of anger (8.8%), pride (3.8%), regret (7.5%), excitement (3.8%), and none of these feelings (16.3%).

### ROLE OF LOCATION IN YOUNGSTERS GANG VIOLENCE

Location	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
urban area	43	53.8	53.8	53.8
suburban area	19	23.8	23.8	77.5
rural area	18	22.5	22.5	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the distribution of respondents by location. The majority (53.8%) are from urban areas, followed by suburban areas (23.8%) and rural areas (22.5%). The total number of responses is 80, representing 100% of the data.

### PREVENTION OF GANG JOINING

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
better family environment	18	22.5	22.5	22.5
more job opportunities	13	16.3	16.3	38.8
stronger police presence	15	18.8	18.8	57.5
access to sports \recreational programs	11	13.8	13.8	71.3
none of the above	19	23.8	23.8	95.0
6.00	4	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

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The chart indicates that the respondents preferred improved family surroundings (22.5%) and increased police visibility (18.8%) for preventing gangs, while 23.8% thought none of the given choices worked.

### FAMILY MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN VIOLENCE

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	17	21.3	21.3	21.3
no	51	63.8	63.8	85.0
unsure	8	10.0	10.0	95.0
4.00	1	1.3	1.3	96.3
5.00	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This bar chart 1 indicates that 17 individuals (21.3%) expressed yes regarding family participation in gang violence. 51 individuals (63.8%) expressed no regarding family participation in gang. 8 individuals (10.0%) expressed uncertainty regarding their family member participation.

### REASON BEHIND THE GANG JOINING

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
protection from violence	22	27.5	27.5	27.5
financial support \money making opportunities	8	10.0	10.0	37.5
drug use \access to substance	10	12.5	12.5	50.0
family tradition	12	15.0	15.0	65.0
status and respect	10	12.5	12.5	77.5
revenge or retaliation	8	10.0	10.0	87.5
excitement	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This table displays the leading causes for joining a gang based on 80 answers. Protection against violence comes in at the first place with 27.5%, then there is family tradition (15%), followed by drug use (12.5%). There is financial assistance (15%), status (12.5%), revenge (10%), and excitement (12.5%) as additional factors, all sharing 10-12.5% each. There are a total of 80 valid responses.

**ROLE OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL IN GANG ACTIVITIES**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
major role	28	35.0	35.0	35.0
moderate	19	23.8	23.8	58.8
minor role	15	18.8	18.8	77.5
no role at all	16	20.0	20.0	97.5
5.00	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

This chart shows the perceived role of certain factors in 80 responses. The majority of respondents (35%) feel the factor plays a major role, followed by moderate (23.8%) and minor roles (18.8%). A smaller portion (20%) report no role at all, with 2.5% giving a numerical rating (5.00).

**DISCUSSION**

This study offers key findings on the psychological, social, and environmental conditions that drive young people to be involved in gang violence. A major finding is the significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.664, p < 0.01$ ) between believing that membership in a gang will bring respect and feeling safe, indicating that gangs meet emotional needs for identity, protection, and belongingness— particularly among individuals who do not have these from other sources. Equally, the moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.364, p = 0.001$ ) between the belief in good role models and gangs as protective also illustrates the distorted perception that some young people have about the leadership and role of gangs. The emotional climate also reinforces these findings. Respect (15%) and fear (20%) were the most common emotions connected to gang life, reflecting a survival response and social approval. In the meantime, 21.3% of respondents acknowledged family participation in gang activity, reflecting intergenerational transmission and normalization of violent acts. Location information indicates that the majority of participants (53.8%) were from urban settings, supporting the notion that high-density, economically disadvantaged environments are hotbeds for gang recruitment. Prevention preferences also differed: better family environments (22.5%) and increased law enforcement presence (18.8%) were favored, but a notable 23.8% felt none of the interventions offered were adequate—suggesting a lack of confidence in current systems. Together, these results highlight the importance of multi-dimensional intervention efforts. Efforts must not only be directed towards addressing structural inequality but also work on psychological needs through counseling, mentoring, and community-based programs that provide youth with a legitimate alternative to gang existence.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This research presents a well-rounded discussion of the psychological, social, and environmental factors that drive young people to participate in gang violence. The research reveals that the perceived rewards of gang membership—protection, respect, and belonging—are often more significant than the risks involved for vulnerable youth. Strong correlations with emotional variables such as fear and respect, as well as the impact of peer pressure and family tradition, support the deeply rooted attractiveness of gang culture in urban, socioeconomically disadvantaged environments. Furthermore, the data show a concerning normalization of violence through intergenerational transmission and warped

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role models. Combating these problems calls for a multifaceted approach that not only confronts structural disparities but also addresses emotional and psychological needs with focused mental health care, community guidance, and access to education and employment opportunities. Prevention has to be community-based and comprehensive to break the glamorization of gangs and provide young people meaningful and positive alternatives. If not done, the cycle of gang membership is certain to continue, exacerbating violence and instability in already fragile communities.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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