



Criminality among Rural Youth

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ABSTRACT

In general, the term “youth” designates a phase of life that falls between childhood and maturity and is characterized by social, psychological, and physical shifts. In the modern world, investigating a few rural areas shows the youth’s behaviors regarding anti-social activities. This article aims to discuss the relationship between rural youth and criminality in the Sri Lankan context. Also, the objectives of this secondary data-based research are to investigate the nature of criminal activities among rural youth, analyze factors that contribute to criminal behaviors in rural settings, identify prevention and intervention strategies to minimize criminal activities, and promote awareness and education among the rural youth to address the root causes of criminal behaviors in rural areas. The methodology involved systematically reviewing and synthesizing available literature from diverse sources, including academic journals, books, and reputable online repositories. The research results and the discussion have shown the main criminal activities of rural areas, which were assaults against individuals and properties, environmental crimes, agricultural crimes, substance abuse, etc. Because of a lack of education, a lack of resources in rural areas, and the collapse of family institutions, youth have been involved in criminality. Then, youth have done these anti-social behaviors based on mainly sociological factors. Therefore, actions should be taken to prevent anti-social behaviors through awareness programmes, focus on education, provide opportunities to be involved in the job market, and maintain partnerships with the government and NGOs.

1. Introduction

Youth is significant characters of any country. Youth is the precious human resource of every country. They are one of the resources nations have. Children are an investment in the country. Youths are the security wall of the country. Then as a nation, we have to keep our concern for the youth. Therefore, policymakers and communities are concerned about the increasing rate of rural youth involvement in criminal activities. Studying the factors that influence youth crime in rural regions, the different types of offenses that are common, among this population, and future prevention and intervention strategies are essential for understanding the complexity of this issue. Furthermore, it is forecasted that a significant number of youths' delinquent behaviours are related to violence. This situation is much more different in the rural context with the constant background of the society in Sri Lanka when comparing inconstant policies (Wijewardena and Dias, 2023, p. 15). Nevertheless, in Western Region Megapolis Project (WRMPP, 2016) it is emphasized that only it should be noted that 77.4% of people

live in rural and semi-urban zones, with just 18.2% of the population residing in urban areas in Sri Lanka. Growing abilities and a wealthy lifestyle, along with unfavorable sociopolitical and environmental circumstances, are the main causes of the rising crime rate in all emerging nations (Rathnayake, 2015). With the current situation with Sri Lanka's economy, the country's rural population in 2021 increased by 0.9% from 2020 to 17,977,378. Furthermore, according to the World Bank, the nation is urbanizing more quickly than official data would indicate (World Bank, 2020).

According to the United Nations, while age is the easiest way to define this group, especially in education and employment, since "youth" is often referred to as a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education and finding their first job, youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood. For this reason, youth as a category is more fluid than other fixed age groups. The United Nations mentions a few definitions as follow

Table 01. Definitions according to several UN entities.

Youth and young people

Entity/Instrument/Organization	Age (Years)	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth 15-24	Un Instruments, statistics
UN-Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth 15-32	Agenda 21
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescents:10-19 Young people:10-24	UNFPA
UNICEF/ The Convention on Rights of the child	Youth:15-24 Child until 18	UNICEF
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15-35	African Union,2006

Source: United Nations, n.d., p. 2

The above chart, Table 01, compiles several United Nations entities and instruments that have defined age ranges for "Youth" and other terms. It reveals the inconsistencies in the

way global organizations define transitional age brackets between childhood and adulthood, assisting researchers in contextualizing youth-focused policies.

One of the most crucial phases of a person's growth is adolescence. It is a time for many people to celebrate successes, form new connections, and enter into their first romantic relationships. Some teenagers use this period to build self-control models, learn to accept responsibility for their behaviours, and broaden their knowledge and experience of social relationships. However, a variety of circumstances can impact individuals at this developmental stage and lead to violent, aggressive, and antisocial behaviour. Both juvenile criminality and criminal behaviour have a significant impact on the community and the lives of teenagers. The court system frequently disregards the juveniles' age and immaturity of those who have been convicted; frequent locking up teenagers frequently results in reoffending and negatively impacts the youth's future social and professional prospects (Scott and Steinberg, 2008, pp.16-26).

1.1 Literature review

Jeeva (2011) has done research on the Rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders in Sri Lanka. The Researcher discusses juvenile delinquency in Sri Lanka, emphasizing the need to identify its causes and the failures of current rehabilitation programs. It highlights the importance of tailored rehabilitation policies to address the unique needs of juvenile offenders. According to the results of research, it concludes that the existing policies and methods for the rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders in Sri Lanka are failing, as evidenced by increasing rates of juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for a special rehabilitation policy that addresses the unique needs of juvenile offenders to effectively reduce reconviction rates. also, the researcher highlights the importance of identifying the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency to inform better rehabilitation strategies. There is a call for a re-evaluation of current practices in the juvenile justice

system to improve outcomes for juvenile delinquents (Jeeva, 2011). The researcher suggests that without significant changes, the social problems associated with juvenile delinquency will continue to escalate in the country.

Structural Transformation of Society and Development of Criminality: A Case Study from Sri Lanka, researched by Ekanayaka in 2016. In that study, it has examined how criminality has evolved in the history of Sri Lanka in the post-independence era and explains the various socio-cultural, economic, and political factors and forces that shaped the criminal acts. The Researcher has explained how such criminal acts have been addressed by the legal system of the country. In that historical analysis of crime in Sri Lanka, the researcher has explored their trends and patterns, causes, and social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the nature of crimes as they appeared during the last 30 years of the civil war, and how vulnerable groups have been involved in crime, were examined (Ekanayaka,2017).

Rathnayake and others (2025) have done research on the Role of subculture in provoking violent behaviour among youth: A qualitative inquiry in a vocational training institution in Sri Lanka. That qualitative study was conducted to explore the role of subculture in provoking violence among youth in a vocational training institution in Sri Lanka's Central Province. Subculture-associated violence was accepted by the participants, including victims. Students perceived it as their responsibility to continue forms of violence associated with subculture, such as ragging, and passed their traumatic experiences on to their juniors. Students reported pressure from seniors to conform to the subculture, which affects the psychological well-being and academic activities of students. Subculture in the college played a significant role in provoking violent behaviour among students. Evidence from this study contributes to viewing violence through the subcultural lens in the

educational institutions of youth and taking necessary actions. Violence is a possible outcome of drifting away from conventional society into the subcultures of delinquency. Little is known about the role that subcultures play in the development of violence in tertiary educational institutions. Wijewardena & Dias (2023) have researched neglected crime prevention mechanisms and rural youth in Sri Lanka. According to that, the peer group association can also lead to consumption, substance use, and addiction. Gang societies may continue to grow, which may result in more crime reports. Juveniles who have a strong affiliation with their peer groups and a weaker one with their families; therefore, more likely than others to commit crimes. Empirical evidence suggests that delinquency can be significantly impacted by the relationship between peer groups and familial attachment loss. Families also stress the need for having an effective role in preventing and controlling crime.

In South Asian nations, studies on teenage violence in schools are still in their infancy. Therefore, programs for prevention cannot be designed well because of a lack of knowledge about the elements that contribute to peer violence. Wijeratne and others have done research on Correlates of peer violence among 13- to 15-year-olds in Gampaha District schools in Sri Lanka: Findings from a comparison between violent and non-violent adolescents. In Gampaha district schools in Sri Lanka, this study was conducted to evaluate the correlates of peer aggression among adolescents aged 13 to 15.

To distinguish between "violent" and "non-violent" teenagers, a cross-sectional study was conducted. Based on their participation in violence, study, and control populations were determined. To evaluate the correlates of peer violence, an unmatched case-control (1 case: 1 control) analysis was performed. Correlates for relational (verbal and non-verbal) and physical violence were found using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Male sexuality was associated with physical and relational peer violence (Wijeratne et al. 2014).

The literature on youth crime and delinquency takes into consideration family demographic information, neighborhood features, the way family instability affects young people's exposure to violence during a period and location where crime is significant (Cavanagh et al., 2018). In their article, Mamoni Hazarika, (2018) examines "Problems of Youth in Rural Areas: Special reference to Assam" and that study was about the finest human resource for accelerating a nation's growth is its youth. Agriculture is the cornerstone of the Indian economy. About 68% of individuals reside in rural regions. The Indian economy primarily focuses on rural areas. Both economic well-being for social change is implied by rural development. Youth development is crucial for boosting the rural economy. However, they have encountered several issues in rural regions from various angles. Particularly in Assam, young people suffer a host of issues, including poverty, migration, a lack of quality educational opportunities, a lack of suitable career opportunities, social issues, political instability, and adjustment issues (Hazarika, 2018).

Remaswamy (2013) reports that rape is a prevalent crime against women in India, with one of the highest rates of death for girls under the age of five in Asian countries (Solotaroff & Pande, 2014). In rural settings, female youngsters reported the highest rates of violent crime. Furthermore, youngsters in a relationship, bride price-giving dowries, and premature ages are all common issues. In addition, the factors stem from the lowest social position of female rural youth, inadequate education, and a lack of finances. Adolescent delinquent behaviour also frequently includes illegal gambling.

Melton and others with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention did some research in 1998 regarding "violence among

rural youth". Public perception and policymakers believe that juvenile violence is primarily an urban issue. It is not only an urban issue, but also a rural issue. It is a rural issue. In reality, densely populated locations have higher overall crime rates. On the other hand, in light of the necessity of planning and study concerning teenage violence, complacency is not warranted. This collection of research aimed to fill a knowledge gap about the types and frequencies of youth violence in rural and nonmetropolitan areas, community-level indicators of youth violence, and the efficacy of violence prevention initiatives in these areas. Bullying in schools is not a new phenomenon, but scholars, educators, and the media have recently taken a keen interest in the problem. Findings from several extensive studies conducted overseas, particularly in Scandinavia, England, and Canada, have shed light on the types and frequencies of bullying that occur among schoolchildren in various nations. While all of the research's conclusions point to bullying as a serious issue for school-age children, there are notable regional variations in the frequency of bullying. It is astonishing how little is known about bullying in American schools to date. Furthermore, no published study has made an effort to evaluate bullying among school-age children in the United States using techniques like those employed in extensive research overseas (Melton et. al, 1998).

According to that, the study explores the appropriate crime mechanism of the rural context in Sri Lanka to prevent and control crime by the youth, and the study aimed to provide some recommendations that assist in combating delinquency in the rural context.

1.2 Objectives

- Investigate the nature of criminal activities among rural youth aged between 15 and 29 in the contemporary Sri Lankan context.
- Analyze factors that contribute to criminal behaviors in rural settings.

- Identify prevention and Intervention strategies to minimize criminal activities.
- Recommend promoting awareness and education among rural youth to address the root causes of criminal behaviours in rural areas.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a literature review approach to explore rural youth and criminality. The methodology involved systematically reviewing and synthesizing available literature from diverse sources, including academic journals, books, and reputable online repositories. The inclusion criteria were defined to ensure that only studies focusing on the criminality of rural youths in rural areas were included. Data extraction involved identifying the key themes, methodologies, findings, and implications of each selected study. The synthesized findings were analyzed to identify common patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. This study aims to provide valuable insights into rural youth and criminality through critical appraisal and thematic analysis.

The first step in selecting papers involves identifying reliable academic databases and sources that provide access to a wide array of literature. Papers were systematically searched by using well-thought-out keywords such as rural youth, rural areas, criminality, and crime prevention that relate to the research questions. A preliminary screening of titles and abstracts was done to eliminate irrelevant studies as quickly as possible. Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria with respect to publication date, peer-reviewed status, quality of methodology, and geographical focus were applied to narrow the selection further. Full-text review of the shortlisted papers was done in detail, confirming relevance and rigor, with emphasis on those with strong

methodologies and those contributing significantly to the topic.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Rural criminality

"Rurality" is not a consistent notion. In general, "rural" refers to places far from cities. Many of these places are in agricultural, farming, or fishing regions. Rural areas are home to about 53% of the world's population, as well as more than 70% of the impoverished (Hazelman 2010). Criminality refers to the quality or state of being a criminal. It is a socially harmful act or omission that breaches the values protected by a state (Schafers & Wormith, 2023).

Differences among the socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural norms, and social lives of individuals living in smaller, less densely populated areas and those living in bigger, more densely populated areas can be explained in a variety of ways. With the provision that rural community variances are larger than any generic differences between rural and urban locations, there are still three crucial differences. First, residents of rural areas are more likely to know one another and engage in a variety of social roles with one another; this is frequently referred to as a larger "density of acquaintanceship" (Freudenburg, 1986). Second, in rural communities, a high density of acquaintanceship fosters member cohesion and a stronger normative structure. However, it may also amplify patterns of discrimination and segregation due to social class and economic inequality, race and ethnicity, lifestyle choices, and gendered expectations (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014). The economic system of many rural areas is also limited in, then it may be a risk of criminality.

According to Deflem (1999), Rural-urban distinctions have long formed a fundamental way of theorizing about how crime varies by place. The most influential conceptual typology in framing rural-urban differences

remains the *gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* developed by the late 19th/early 20th century sociologist, Ferdinand Tonnies (Deflem, 1999).

Many scholars have identified that there was a relationship between youths and crime, and the rural places have also affected which kinds of crime were high and which kinds were low. Rural criminality in Sri Lanka is a complex social phenomenon, shaped by economic and cultural factors and geographic realities peculiar to rural settings. It displays a range of issues such as agricultural theft, IPV, drug abuse, and localized violent crimes that are deeply intertwined with the social fabric and economic conditions of rural communities.

In contrast, the criminal patterns in Sri Lanka diverge from those characteristics of urban centers through the higher incidences of property crimes relating to agriculture, such as theft of crops and livestock. Intimate partner violence against women in rural areas has been a huge concern and is underreported because of associated social stigma and limited access to justice systems. Substance abuse among rural populations, particularly alcohol and other illicit drugs, has also been related to increased violent and non-violent crimes in these sectors.

3.2 Types of crimes

The deliberate commission of an act that is forbidden, dangerous or detrimental to society, and subject to criminal penalties is referred to as a crime. It involves actions that are illegal under a certain jurisdiction, with notable differences between nations and even within areas. According to Edge and others (2024), the definition and categorization of crime are subject to shifts in society, attitudes, and legal frameworks. As a result, new criminal laws are created and existing ones become obsolete.

Emile Durkheim believed that crime was an unavoidable and common part of social

existence. According to Durkheim, crime has several significant social purposes.

- Crime serves to draw moral lines and define the difference between those who follow and those who do not follow social norms.
- When a particularly heinous crime occurs, the community unites in outrage, strengthening social cohesion.
- Crime fosters social cohesion because it unites the society in anger over particularly heinous crimes (Weeber, 2004).

Various crimes that primarily affect rural populations are referred to as “rural criminality”, and they are frequently distinguished from urban crime in terms of their form and consequences.

When we discuss about what are rural criminalities can identified many more crimes in rural areas. We all know in rural areas the main income method is agriculture. In the agricultural section, there are theft of farming equipment, vehicles, and livestock. And also damage farms and farm buildings. Addiction to alcohol and drugs, as well as violence, are common offenses that are most noticeable in rural young people (Ceccato, 2015). A variety of crimes affecting populations living outside urban areas are included in the category of rural crime. Rural areas have different issues from metropolitan areas, ranging from vandalism to agricultural theft and cattle rustling. Large-scale topography, a lack of resources for law enforcement, remote locations, and other factors frequently make solving these problems difficult. Our goals are to raise awareness of the problems, deepen knowledge, and strengthen public safety (National Rural Crime Network, n.d.). Agricultural crime is strongly linked to rurality, and Ceccato (2015) notes that studies on this subject are frequently overlooked, despite the fact that agricultural

crime is prevalent in developing nations. Cattle theft, particularly cows and cattle, is a commonly recognized crime, and it is impossible to ignore additional livestock theft of other crops and industrial tools. Young people are heavily encouraged to steal by their peer groups and the larger society (Cavanagh et al., 2018).

Drug manufacturing is reportedly another organized crime that involves young people. Additionally, for the previous two years, juveniles were largely responsible for this offence. A lot of people grow cannabis, and most of them are encouraged by their peers. The statistics have shown that assaults, sexual events, and homicides are among the violent crimes that rural kids commit. Reviewing the literature, there is an effort in Sri Lanka that highlights the small probability of rural teenagers committing rapes (Wijewardena and Dias, 2023). When discussing Crimes against wildlife, these include poaching, unlawful hunting, and the persecution of animals that are protected. This kind of criminality upends regional ecosystems. Public health and rural landscapes may be seriously impacted by environmental crimes such as unlawful garbage dumping. National Rural Crime Network. (n.d.).

3.3 Reasons for crimes

There is a strong relationship between rural youth and criminality. When we discuss criminality, we should identify the root causes. Crime's underlying causes have been extensively studied and reported. The main causes of crime include unfavorable social, economic, cultural, and familial circumstances. Understanding the causes of crime is crucial to preventing it.

There are three main factors to committing a crime.

- Biological factors
- Sociological factors

- Psychological factors. (Rathnapala, 1990).

In mainly identifying these factors most probably in rural areas among rural youths.

When discussing Poverty and crimes, in addition to a lack of financial resources, poverty manifests itself in a lack of educational opportunities, lack of meaningful employment options, poor housing, lack of hope, and prejudice against persons living in poverty (CS&CPC, 1996). If people were unable to fulfill their necessities by a legal way it is socially deviant behavior. Researchers are convinced this position caused an increase in the crime rate in society. Though Sri Lanka has reached development in previous decades, it does not show a reduction of crime rates among poor people (Ekanayake, 2018).

The social structure mirrors to citizens and communities what we value and how we set priorities. Social root causes of crime are inequality, not sharing power, lack of support to families and neighborhoods, real or perceived inaccessibility to services, and lack of leadership in communities, low value placed on children and individual well-being, the overexposure to television as a means of recreation. The CSCPC believes that families are uniquely placed in contributing to raising healthy responsible members of society. But the task of putting children first goes well beyond the family to include communities and society. Dysfunctional family conditions contribute to future delinquency.

These conditions are,

- Parental inadequacy
- Parental conflict
- Parental criminality
- Lack of communication (both in quality and quantity)
- Lack of respect and responsibility
- Abuse and neglect of children
- Family violence.

Crime prevention must focus on improvements in all three areas (CS&CPC,1996, p. 3).

Because many 'chronic' offenders start engaging in anti-social activities before and throughout adolescence, when risk-taking behavior tends to be more widespread than during other periods of life, research highlights the benefits of concentrating crime prevention efforts on early childhood.

Due to the aggressive and risk-taking nature of crime, men are more likely than women to commit offences. When viewed in light of social learning and cultural norms, these biological differences present significant preventive potential. Young people are more prone to associate with peers who are involved in criminal activity when they don't feel like they belong in the family or the community, which raises their risk of committing crimes. Through peer-based approaches, this relationship between an individual's behavior and that of their peers presents important potential for prevention. Many interpersonal crimes are either related to substance abuse or are committed while under the influence of alcohol. Adolescents who regularly use drugs and drink are more likely to be convicted as adults. Thus, it is possible to drastically lower crime by preventing or postponing the onset of substance usage as well as minimizing the negative effects of problematic substance use. Individuals suffering from mental health disorders are more likely to become victims or run afoul of the law. Correctional facilities have an overabundance of individuals with psychiatric problems. Appropriate mental health resources and facilities must be freely accessible and immediately available to lower the risk (Preventing Crime, 2017). People tend to blame the family more often than the criminal when they attempt to understand crime. Families must be understood from the perspective of a larger social and communal family. According to research, parental crime and significant family conflict, along with inconsistent, negligent, excessively harsh, or

permissive parenting styles, all raise the likelihood of delinquency. Improving parenting techniques and offering support to families present significant chances to reduce crime. Many of the young people and adults who are admitted to correctional facilities have been unemployed or underemployed for a long time. The chance of reoffending is significantly increased by unemployment following jail sentences. Increasing work prospects has a major positive impact on community safety. There is still an overrepresentation of many minority groups in correctional facilities. In actuality, racial and ethnic elements linked to criminal activity are the results of maintaining people's social and economic disadvantages. To mitigate such disadvantages, there is a need to reduce stereotyping, prejudice, and marginalization while promoting equity and a sense of belonging (Wilkins et. al. 2014).

Education is one of the factors of someone's behavior. Then it has more differences in their lives on educational level. More people have found their jobs, according to their education level. In the present situation, it must not be as it is. But all job opportunities have some indicators for recruitment for the post. So, there is a relationship between education level and job opportunities. According to that someone can earn a big income in white-collar jobs. And also, for the lack of education of the people, they can't earn as they think. That income is not enough to fulfill their needs and wants. In this situation, many people commit crimes such as theft, and burglary and join organizing crimes, etc. When referring to the prison reports of the Sri Lanka prison department those rates indicate that the education level of prisoners is low (Prison Report, 2021). Hjalmarsson & Holmlund & Lindquist did research regarding the topic of "The impact of education on crime: International Evidence" in 2012. In an attempt to combat crime, policymakers frequently concentrate on punishment and enforcement; however, new research indicates that other policy tools may also be useful. The analysis centers on the

mounting body of research from throughout the globe that indicates measures aimed at raising educational attainment and enhancing school quality may also effectively lower crime rates.

According to that, we can identify some of the main causes of rural criminality include poverty, unemployment, and disintegration. Most rural families rely on agriculture, and with developing economic stress, conflicts and illegal activities, such as smuggling and illicit trade along rural-urban borders, have arisen. The current economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic have further heightened these vulnerabilities, leading to increased crime and social problems.

3.4 Impact of Crimes

Rural criminality in Sri Lanka has significant and multifaceted impacts on rural communities, affecting social cohesion, economic development, public health, and overall community wellbeing. Crimes about agriculture, the environment, and wildlife have a significant impact on multiple levels. First, high replacement costs and missed productivity. Second, these offenses might jeopardize rural communities' ability to stick together. Communities can become fractured when a victim reports theft or negligent farm management that harms the environment to a neighbor or someone else in the district (Barclay & Bartel, 2015).

When emphasizing world issues, for the past six decades, many rural development programs have failed to connect the needs of the rural poor and their economic needs partly due to the failure to synchronize the local and global economic connections (Kallaway, 2001). For instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank restructuring programs of the 1990s affected numerous households with policies that ultimately escalated the unemployment crisis in Kenya (Kallaway, 2001; Prince, 2013). According to that the rural youth's criminality, it may be a big harm

to society. Therefore, there is a necessity, for research to find root causes of crimes in society.

Rural criminality deeply erodes social capital and trust within communities. Crimes such as intimate partner violence and gender-based violence not only harm individual victims but also contribute to the breakdown of family structures and community networks. The pervasive nature of such violence often leads to normalization and silencing of victims because of stigma and lack of support systems, further perpetuating cycles of abuse and social disintegration.

The economic consequences of rural criminality include direct losses from thefts—such as agricultural produce, livestock, and tools—which are vital assets for rural household's dependent on farming. Persistent insecurity and crime may deter investment and reduce productivity, further deepening poverty and unemployment in rural areas.

Rural criminality often cuts across public health challenges. The presence of substance abuse-related crimes perpetuates physical harm and raises demand for health and social services. The extensive use of agricultural chemicals and resultant poisonings, including suicides, accordingly signals a public health aspect of rural crime and distress.

The impacts of crime are magnified by challenges related to law enforcement in rural Sri Lanka. The geographic isolation from facilities and services, lack of police resources, and inadequacies within victim support systems delay justice and reduce reporting rates. This institutional weakness perpetuates impunity and discourages victims from seeking help, a situation in which the vicious circle of crime flourishes unmet. Limited data on rural crime further hinders informed policy responses and resource allocation.

Rural criminality in Sri Lanka significantly compromises social harmony, economic stability, health, and governance in rural communities. Addressing these impacts requires integrated approaches that enhance policing, support victims, promote economic development, and reinforce social capital in rural settings.

3.5 Preventions and controls of crimes

The community is very important in both directly and indirectly protecting young people from violence and criminal activity. Communities That Care (CTC), providing communities the ability to organize themselves around preventing crime organizing, was introduced by Hawkings (1999). At a deeper level, community norms work to prevent addiction by actively opposing substance use (alcohol and drugs). The main issue arises in neighborhoods with disorderly urbanization, as this causes inhabitants' behavior to shift in relation to these ideas. Rural kids may take up the same messy habits, such as vandalism, gang violence, and other crimes, as a result of the disorderly urban conditions. The trend of crime rates may even be caused by an inadequately planned built environment. Strategies for preventing crime must be used even when meeting the basic needs of young people living in rural areas, such as organizing, developing, and opening a hospital.

The hospital's accompanying taxi culture has the ability to attract more unattached adolescents to the neighborhood and generate more opportunities for the criminal inclination. Further studies showed that 15% to 20% of crimes are caused by environmental factors (Wijewardena and Dias, 2023).

There are three levels of prevention. Primary prevention can be the most cost-effective method of dealing with a problem because it can reduce costs in many different areas over the long term. Universal programs are only ever as effective as their ability to include and

support populations at risk. Secondary prevention attempts to stop a crime from occurring after certain "warning signs" have appeared. An example might be programs, which focus on a specific problem or problem group. Law enforcement efforts generally fall into the category of tertiary prevention. Preventive efforts strive to achieve the following goals:

- Reduce long-term emotional and behavioral issues in all youths.
- Promote optimal social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development in children at highest risk.
- Strengthen the ability of communities to respond effectively to children and their families in social and economic need.
- Successful prevention programs share many of the following characteristics:
- Enhance children's mental health and promote a healthier environment for children.
- Are freely accessible to all youths.
- Do not single out or stigmatize individuals, families, or communities
- Focus on education, building competence and skills
- Actively include families and communities in development and implementation (CS&CPC,1996, p. 3).

Additionally, we can reduce youth criminality by implementing these points.

- Should conduct research and analysis, identify problems and create solutions.
- Should be facilitating training and awareness sessions and workshops to avoid delinquency patterns.
- Keeping partnerships with the government and NGOs.
- Advocate for policy reforms.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This overview shows that rural criminality in Sri Lanka is multifaceted, shaped by social vulnerabilities, economic hardships, and specific environmental risks that differ from

urban crime patterns. Addressing rural crime requires tailored approaches recognizing these unique conditions. Common crimes in rural Sri Lanka include agricultural theft, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and substance-related offenses. These are often intertwined with social and economic vulnerabilities in the rural populace. Violence against women, including intimate partner violence, is notably prevalent in rural sectors, often exacerbated by limited access to support services and legal recourse. Studies highlight contributing factors, including poverty, unemployment, social disintegration, and lack of effective policing or community safety nets in rural localities. The geographic and social isolation typical of rural communities complicates crime control, as law enforcement resources and victim support are more limited compared to urban centers.

Efforts to empower rural youth are crucial for fostering sustainable development in rural areas. By addressing employment disparities, enhancing access to resources, and promoting engagement in agribusiness, these initiatives aim to create a more equitable and vibrant future for young people in rural communities.

Especially as a nation always think about how we empower rural youths to get a sustainable country. There is a main issue of the unemployability of youths. A few decades ago, youths were farming. After industrialization, they came to industrial institutions to find jobs. Then they join industries and they earn money. Always they tried to fulfill their needs and wants. In especially, they earn money for their labor. As a result of these facts, people were selfish, and they egos. Then people don't accept social norms, values, morals, etc. In this setup, society has become anomie. Due to this, we can see so many anti-social behaviors in this society.

To reduce those anti-social activities, we have to take action to develop the main

aspects of the country. There are strategies for preventing and controlling crimes in society. Not only in rural areas but also in urban areas, it should be done to minimize crimes.

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