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[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



The main focus of this research paper is about juvenile delinquents and how they have affected the present criminal justice system. Currently, the number of juvenile delinquents or regarded as children in conflict with the law continue to grow for the past decade. Juvenile delinquents are considered one of the serious concerns in the criminal justice system since most of them are imprisoned. Due to the rising number of these youth offenders, several states within the country have created "teen courts" or likewise called the youth courts (Siegel and Welsh, 2010, p. 492). Based on the recent studies, the teen courts are distinct and unique in because it will be the youth themselves who determines how a case will be resolved. The cases falling under the jurisdiction of teen courts cover juvenile offenders aged 10 years to 15 years old, who do not have records of prior arrests and face minor violations of law. Cole, Smith and Dejong (2012) stated that some of the common offenses of these youth offenders are vandalism, shoplifting and disorderly conduct. For some of the offenders who commit more serious crimes, they suffer imprisonment primarily for purpose of retribution for the wrong doing that they have committed against the law and social order. Corriero (2006) argues that the current practice of the juvenile justice system is to conduct trials of the youth offenders inside the adult courts. This in effect places the youth in the same degree of judgment expected of adult offenders. Thus, the imposition of capital punishment against the offenders aged below 18 years is unconstitutional. Reformatory justice dictates that children should be given a chance to reform character deficiencies are to be equated to the failings of a minor child. They cannot be considered in the same level as adult offenders for the reason that they do not fully discern the

consequences of their actions. Youth offenders must not be exposed to difficult ordeals such as trial, pre-trial detention and imprisonment. This will include the possibility of encountering cruelty and violence at a young age leaving them defenseless. Looking at a different perspective, these offenders have exhibit greater chance for reformation when compared to adult offenders.

Corriero (2006) contends that it is justifiable for children to be disciplined for criminal actions. However, the role of the state is to protect and nurture the youth offenders as they learn from their misbehaviors. When the youth offenders are placed under detention, they suffer the probability of being exposed to violence and maltreatment inside the prisons, which deprives them of education and health services (Kahdivi, 2008).

Identification of the problem

In order to improve the present juvenile justice system, a study should be done to respond to the issues that affects the rights of youth offenders.

Methodology

For this study, the data methodology that will be used for this research study shall be mixed methodology approach which is a combination of series of personal interviews and self-report questionnaires. The qualitative interview shall be based on the review of literature on the role of the government to improve the diversion programs of youth offenders. The interviews for this study shall cover demographic data, the number of youth offenders serving sentence for each state, the offenses that were committed and to determine the effectiveness of the current programs under the present criminal justice

system. The objective of this study is to arrive with proposals and recommendations on how to improve the current diversion programs for the juvenile delinquents.

Proposals/Recommendations:

The first proposal is to create community-based programs especially designed to cater to the youth offenders in all states within the country. These programs must be fully implemented instead of allowing them to undergo pre-trial detention or service of sentence. As a result, the youth offenders will be exposed in an environment that will increase the probability of rehabilitation of their criminal behavior and deter commission of crimes in the future.

The second proposal is to develop educational programs and job training programs that will create an academic foundation that will enhance youth skills and build a career path upon release from detention. It is imperative to provide a consistent emotional support system to help them realize the consequences of their actions.

The third proposal is for the establishment of post-release programs that will influence them towards the road to complete reformation. Those offenders who develop to recidivists or repeat offenders continue to commit offenses due to lack of guidance and attention. The post-release program is the means to monitor the progress of the offenders and the chances of re-offending. The importance of establishing community-based programs is to look for alternative measures for pre-trial detention creating an environment which is conducive for self-improvement (Heilibrun et al., 2005). For the non-

violent offenders, the comprehensive community correction program is an alternative substitute for imprisonment. Based on the restorative justice model, the community corrections programs are viewed as positive measures that are considered as ethical measures that guarantee that the offenders will achieve a certain level of dignity. Aside from these objectives, the programs are grounded on social control theories that must involve parent trainings and functional family therapies (Bohn and Vogel, 2010). The rehabilitation of the youth offenders shall also be dependent on their support system. These programs are expected to eliminate conflicts within the family through arbitration and settlement of family issues, instill discipline, reduce the neglect and abuse of the child, and to foster positive interactions between the parents and their children. At the same time, these community correction programs will give them the ample opportunity to reform to allow them to earn a sense of decency. The purpose of the programs is to transform the youth to become better citizens by contributing towards the success of the community. These community programs targets to establish the juvenile delinquents to a productive place in society and at the same time, serves as a guide reform from the criminal behavior.

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