



## Gangsters in urban societies: How does it road to anti -social behaviour of gang members' Wives

Wijewardhana BVN<sup>1</sup>, Samarakoon MT<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

<sup>2</sup> Professor in Sociology, Department of Sociology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

### Abstract

Youth male ganging culture is a common social phenomenon in urban Sri Lanka. Because of the social stratification and due to ethnic differences, protracted war, poverty and political structure, that growing tendency of youth unrest emerged. Gangs have associated with both married and unmarried youth who considered their family is the gang. Married youth do not have particular concern on basics elements to affirm family bondage. According to this situation the behaviour and the role of gang members' wives have been changed and through that their family background and lifestyle are also changed. This paper tries to reveal how the youth male ganging in urban Sri Lanka affect for the behaviour and the role of gang members' wives, aiming to identify how youth ganging affect for the behaviours and role of gang members' wives.

The Research focused on 164 identified wives above 201 gang members' family, belonging to 75 gangs within 14 GN divisions in Colombo city, within the age group of 18 – 32 years. All the said gangs were identified through snow-ball technique, random sampling and observations. They were interviewed using informal and formal group discussions and case studies were also used.

Results showed that the empathy of the gang based on their environment and education level. Further lower education level effect to the discipline of the gang. Because of that they treat their wives based on lower wisdom. The true factor there was the members could manage their emotional depressions while reaching their objectives via own gangs. The inter-relationship within family members of youth gangsters' shown wider gaps and the expected functionalities of the family setting is not happening at all. Wives play the major role of family by taking the responsibility of their children and family income. Therefore most of them do illegal activities as they couldn't involve in respectful job due to lifestyle and low education. Most of them engage in drug related income avenues and do drug related illegal activities. Therefore the rate of those who were summoned by the police also became higher. Children in these families didn't have childhood and juvenile delinquency is common among those children. In all the youth ganging culture in urban Sri Lanka affect for the changes of their wives behaviour and role.

**Keywords:** anti-social behaviour, gang, gangster, illegal, wives

### Introduction

Gang is a common group who share common interests and who defend each other within their group. They live together & trust each other and lead culture of deviant behaviour of society. Walter B. Miller defined a gang as "a self-formed association of peers bound together by mutual interest. A gang has an identifiable leadership; well develop lines of authority, and other organizational features who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose of purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activities and control over particular territory, facility or type of enterprise (Millar, W.B.1980) <sup>[7]</sup>. Definition of gang subjects to variations based on the parameters such as time, culture, society etc.

According to Carl Taylor's views, gangs are characterized in three groups namely; corporate, territorial and scavengers. On the word of Carl Taylor 'Corporate gangs' focus mainly on making money through criminal activities, whereas, 'Territorial gangs' are quick to use violence to secure what belongs to the gangs and, 'scavenger gangs' perform softly and prone to violent and erratic behavior. Characteristics and behaviors of gangs are exceptionally varied within and across geographical areas (Egley, A., Jr., and Ritz, Christina E. (2006) <sup>[3]</sup>, Weisel, D. L. (2002) <sup>[14]</sup>. Furthermore, there are

many micro cultural behaviors such as; using own set of words to communicate or dressing with strange fashions with specific behavior of a group within a geographical area, or of an organization. This is prevalent in the present world due to many social, economic, and cultural forces. These push many adolescents in the direction of gangs.

A variety of reasons underlies the disaffection of young people from their societies and their families. One of these factors is abuse, both physical and psychological, perpetrated by someone in a position of trust or authority in the life of a young person (Stone, S. S.1999). One of the most debilitating outcomes of abuse experienced by a young person is loss of self-esteem (Ogata SN, Silk KR, Goodrich S, Lohr NE, Westen D, Hill EM.1990) <sup>[8]</sup>. Abuse, and hopelessness and depression that often stem from abuse, frequently lead to loss of self-esteem. The loss of self-esteem leads many adolescents to consider suicide (Sanders B and Giolas MH.1991) <sup>[9]</sup>. Other adolescents; however, react in different ways. Some strike out at the society around them, while others seek acceptance and status in street gangs (Goldstein, A.P., and Glick, B.1994) <sup>[5]</sup>. The cycle of abuse, hopelessness, depression, the loss of self-esteem, and suicide ideation, and seeking a new place in life through street gang affiliation continues mainly by reason of

the failure to develop effective interpersonal skills, in turn, fashioning social disintegration, and interrupted unity within families. Colombo is considered as a city that provides great opportunities for Gangs in Sri Lanka. Most of gang members live in unauthorized areas like shanties etc. Gangsters have defined family as the house in which they could spend the night, whereas, married parties consider family of which they could access for meals as well as sexual desires. They also neglect their family responsibilities. Wives become bread winner of the family and it leads to the poly gamy of the young and various illegal activities implemented in the area. According to this the behaviour and the role of gang members' wives have been changed. This research aimed to identify how youth ganging affect for the behaviour and role of gang members' wives while revealing answers to the question; how the youth male ganging in urban Sri Lanka affect for the behaviour and the role of gang members' wives. The outcome of this research will help to make rules, policies and regulations regarding illegal cultural behaviours of gang members and their wives and also future researchers can use this research as a secondary source.

### Literature review

Gangs are apparently not a new occurrence, but they are still a problem that has to be addressed. Criminal street gangs have become one of the most serious crime problems in most of the developed countries as well as countries such as Sri Lanka. Gang violence including homicides and assaults, drive-by shootings and brutal home-invasion robberies--accounts for one of the largest, single, personal threats to public safety.

Carmela Coccimiglio study on Absent Presence: Women in American Gangster Narrative shows, as a tradition adapted to explore the experiences of African Americans, black gangster texts featuring female gangsters explore the specific ways in which African-American women have been excluded from the gangster's realm and marginalized in the general society (Carmela Coccimiglio, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>.

It is evident from the study "Patterns and determinants of coping behaviour of wives of alcoholics" by R. Chandrasekaran & V. Chitrakeka, that the modes of coping are found to be related to personality of the wives and other situational variables. Given the correlational nature of the data, one cannot attribute any reference to causality. This is because wife's coping behaviour and husband's drinking behaviour can influence each other significantly. Hence, it is important to study the coping behaviour periodically before and after treatment in relation to husband's drinking behaviour. While studying this aspect due consideration may be given to family dynamics to include the modifying effect of other family members (Chandrasekaran. R, Chitrakeka. V 1998) <sup>[4]</sup>.

According to Laura T. Fishman, wives display considerable Ingenuity In devising explanations and Interpretations of their husbands' criminal behavior and arrest which allow their marriages to continue. Few of these Interpretations are, however, permanent; they are usually modified In the course of wives' ongoing Interactions with their husbands. The effect of these definitions Is to "normalize" this behavior and to buffer the wives from external definitions of the situations In which they find themselves (Fishman L.T, 1986) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Delinquent Boys, the Culture of the Gang by Albert K. Cohen points out that every society is internally differentiated into numerous sub-groups, each which ways of thinking and doing that are in some respects peculiarly its own, that one can acquire only by participating in these sub-groups and that one can scarcely help acquiring if he is a full-fledged participant. These cultures within cultures are "subculture". Then there are subcultures within subcultures. There is the subculture of a factory and a shop with the factory; the subculture of a university and of a fraternity within the university; the subculture of a neighborhood and of a family, clique or gang within the neighborhood. All these subcultures have this in common: they are acquired only by interaction with those who already share and embody, in their belief and action, the culture pattern. According to Cohen, "When we speak of a delinquent subculture, we speak of a way of life that has somehow become traditional among certain groups in American society. These groups are the boys, gangs that flourish most conspicuously in the "delinquency neighborhoods" of our larger American cities. The members of these gangs grow up, some to become law-abiding citizens and others to graduate to more professional and adult forms of criminality, but the delinquent tradition is kept alive by the age-groups that succeed them" (Cohen, A.K, 1964) <sup>[2]</sup>.

The most widely recognized theory in this area is Wolfgang & Ferraculti's subculture of violence theory. The argument here is that in some subcultures, norms and values evolve to support and legitimize the use of violence. In these subcultures, for example, the normal response to disrespect becomes violence as opposed to peaceful and other alternatives. As a result, juvenile violence and indeed all forms of violence are not condemned and perpetrators of violence do not feel any guilt for their actions, thus encouraging the youths to be violent. In addition, the neighborhood is also characterized by high level of gun ownership and drug dealings while the songs and lyrics that glorify violence are widespread (Vito. G, Maahs. J, Homes. R, 2007) <sup>[13]</sup>.

### Research Problem

Generally, in the main society gender role of a husband and a wife functions by giving the main role of family life to the husband. Because of that husband play the major role of the family income while doing a respectful job according to his social status and educational background. Therefore, wives also behave according to the husbands' role in the family. Normally in the past Sri Lanka wives have to stay at home and doing domestic works while taking care of children. But in the contemporary (2018) <sup>[14]</sup> Sri Lanka wives also take part in family income avenues as they are educated and raise with the modern ideas of feminism. Even within such situation husbands paly major role of the family by getting the responsibilities. But in gang sub-culture, gangsters consider the gang as their home and they spend most of the time with the gang. So that they miss family responsibilities. Thus gangsters neglect their responsibilities the gender role of the family system might be change. According to the situation identification this research tried to find out;

How the relationship of husband and wife of gang members' family affect for the anti-social behaviour of gangsters' wives

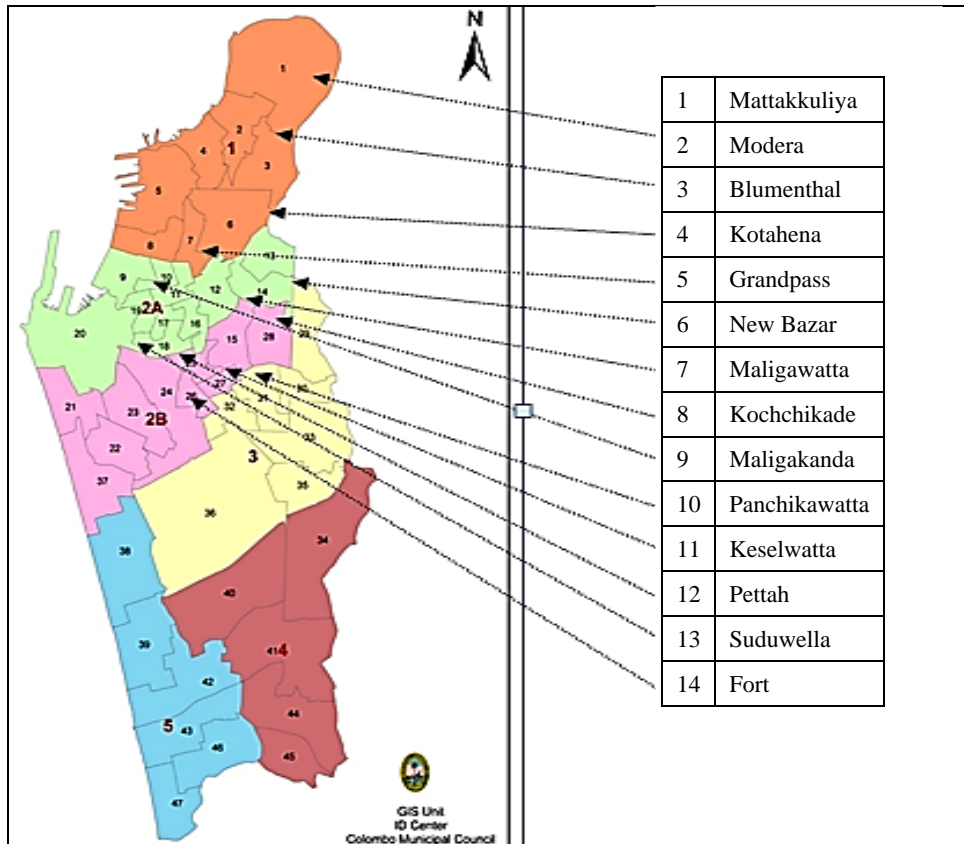
**Objectives of the Study**

- To study the behavioral patterns of urban male gangsters and investigate how youth ganging affect for the behavior and role of gang members’ wives
- To identify the intervention measures so as to prevent the ganging and deviant behaviors of gangsters’ wives to provide a framework for utilizing urban male gangsters and their wives as a human resource in urban social development.

**Research Methodology**

The northern part of Colombo city is recognized for higher rate of crimes. The 14 locations selected out of 47 wards in Colombo are quite prominent for gangs and gang related criminal activities and these areas are as follows:

1. Mattakkuliya; 2. Modera; 3. Blumenthal; 4. Kotahena; 5. Grandpass; 6. New Bazar; 7. Maligawatta; 8. Kochchikade; 9. Maligakanda; 10. Panchikawatta; 11. Keselwatta; 12. Pettah; 13. Suduwella and 14. Fort.



**Fig 1**

The above mentioned areas were selected as the study area of this research. The research focused on 201 identified married youth gang members among 493 youth gang members, and 164 wives above gang members’ family were selected as the research sample. Participants have been structured by using the key variables such as age, location of the respondents and activities. The age range of the interviewees was 18 – 32 years.

All gangs and gang members within the study area have been identified through a snowball technique, using the already available contacts as well as through observations of the gangs in study area. The sample size was calculated using the following formula:

$$n = [\alpha^2 X p (1-p)]/d^2$$

Where

n = required sample size

- $\alpha$  = critical value for specified confidence level (taken as 1.96)
- p = proportion of events being measured among the gang members (taken as 0.5 to obtain the maximum sample size, as the previous proportions are not known)
- d = absolute precision (taken as 0.05)

**Primary data**

This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study and it has conducted in *THREE PHASES*

- First Phase: Field observations carried out to study the characteristics, behaviors, and apparent norms of the gang members and gangs
- Second Phase: An interviewer-administered questionnaire used for collecting quantitative data from gangsters and related groups
- *Third Phase:* In-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted with selected gang members

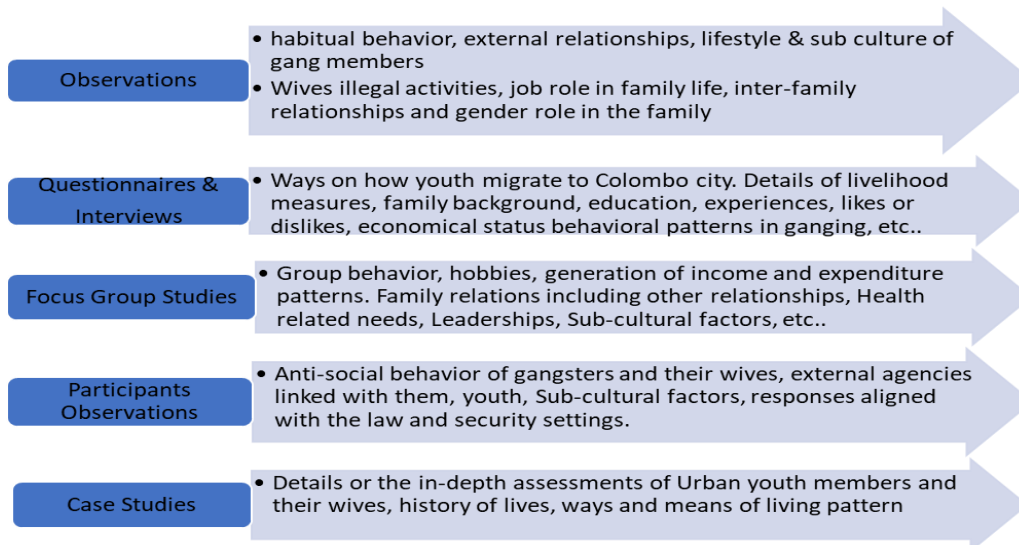


Fig 2

**Nature of gathered data**

**Data analysis**

The data collected from each participant were entered in to the new data base system which was specifically developed for this research. The System stores the data entered into the Database for future use and data sorting and analyzing techniques are in-built into the system to get different analysis

and thus reports as per the objectives of the research. This system was developed using Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 and Microsoft SQL server Management Studio 2008.

**Results and findings**

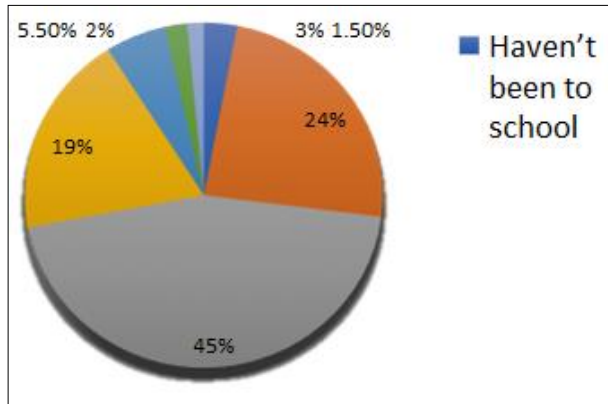
Below charts and figures shows main information about gangsters.

**Table 1:** Number of listed gangs vs. membership in Colombo urban zone

Grama Niladhari Division	Number of Listed Gangs	Total number of membership
Mattakkuliya	09	52
Modera	05	39
Blumendhal	03	16
Kotahena	03	14
New Bazar	09	67
Fort	09	71
Pettah	09	68
Grandpass	04	22
Maligawatta	05	28
Kochchikade	06	30
Suduwella	02	17
Keselwatta	03	20
Panchikawatta	04	24
Maligakanda	04	25
Total	75	493
The ethnicity configuration of gang members within study area (n=493)		
Ethnicity of Gang members	No. of youth	Percentage
Sinhala (Buddhists)	233	48
Tamil (Hindus)	86	17
Muslim (Islamic)	169	34
Other	05	1
Total	493	100
The affiliation mode of responded youth to Colombo City (n= 493)		
How the youth affiliated to Colombo city	Numbers	Percentage
By Birth	181	36.5
Resulted through marriage	42	8.5
Resulted through employment	201	41
Purchased a block of property	19	04
Settled down in an unauthorized Settlement	47	9.5
Other	03	05
Total	493	100

Source: Field Survey

**Level of Education**



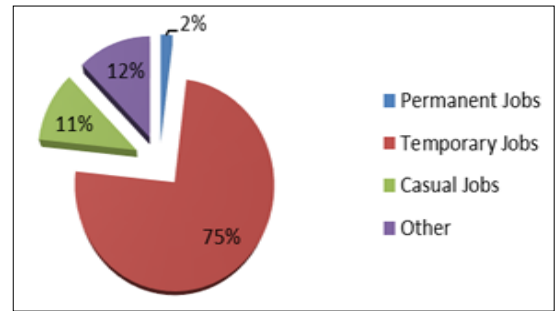
Source: Field Survey

Fig 4

**Employment patterns & nature of employment of gang members**

Table 2

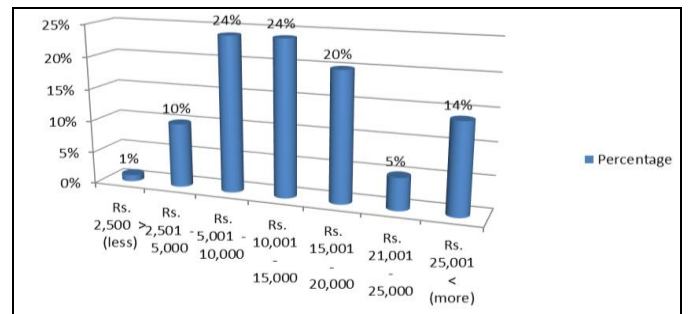
Status of employment	No	Percentage
Yes	445	90
No	48	10
total	493	100



Source: Field Survey

Fig 5

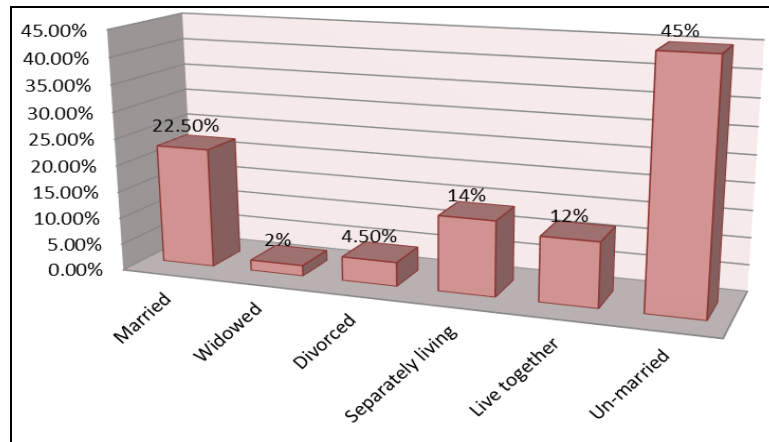
**Categorization of income of the gang members**



Source: Field Survey

Fig 6

**Marital status of the gang members**



Source: Field Survey

Fig 7

**Key Findings**

**Status of employment of the wives of married responding youth**

Table 3

Sl. No.	Income deriving sources	Number	Percentage
1	Labour work	32	15
2	Trading in the town	28	13
3	Support services	07	3
4	Drug related income avenues	46	21.5
5	Selling alcohol	11	5
6	Working as Domestic servants	21	10

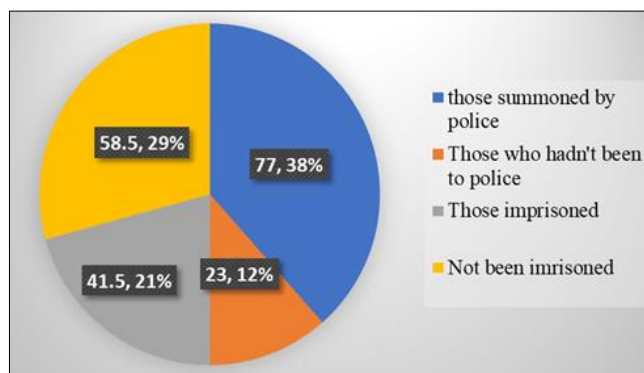
7	Services related to prostitution	09	4
8	Joined in the Government services	06	3
9	Self employed	14	6.5
10	Employed in the private sector	05	2.5
11	Unemployed	33	15.5
12	Other	02	1
13	Total	214	100

Table 4

Sl. No	Nature of the offenses committed	Police		Imprisonment	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	Found Drugs / alcohol in possession	14	(6.5)	21	(10)
2	Selling drugs / Alcohol	16	(7.5)	17	(7.5)
3	Trafficking alcohol / drugs	06	(3)	08	(3.5)
4	Usage of drugs / alcohol	19	(9)	26	(12)
5	Misdeeds by involving in prostitution	08	(3.5)	03	(1.5)
6	Going stray	02	(1)	00	(00)
7	Stealing others' property	06	(3)	04	(1)
8	Assisting to perform crimes	17	(7.5)	04	(2)
9	Quarreling	28	(13)	00	(00)
11	Cheating Money	17	(7.5)	03	(1.5)
12	Assaulting others	06	(3)	02	(1)
13	Cussing	21	(10)	00	(00)
14	Other	09	(2.5)	01	(0.5)
	No misdeeds involved for ever	50	(23)	125	(58.5)
	Total	219	100	214	100

Source: Field Survey

Misdeals involved by wives of the gangsters



Source: Field Survey

Fig 8

In concern with those selected trading as their income source, several women earned income by selling cleaned vegetable & fruits out of stocks originally thrown off from the Manning market. Several other women involved in selling packets of meal and king coconut while some others found selling garments and these income earning categories represented 13%.

Together with above responds there were two other women. One of those was suffering from a mental illness and the other has become disabled due to an accident. Views shared by the neighborhood persons affirmed that these two women had to face these fatal incidences due to their husbands. In reference to several other categories of income earning women, 5% are involved in selling alcohol and 21.5% are dealt with drugs related income avenues. Women identified as SU from

Modera, RM from Keselwatta, KW from Mattakkuliya are famous for selling illicit arrack named 'Kasippu'. A specific feature of these three women was that they had separated from husbands yet, maintaining affairs informally with other gang members.

As a whole these details affirm the socio-economic status of families of interviewed gang members. There were enough evidence to believe that majority of wives of the gang members are habituated to earn income by involving in various illegal processes such as selling drugs and alcohol, prostitution, spying and several other alternative income opportunities was due to the enough support and assistance being made available by their husbands. And in the same manner majority of wives also provide enough support to their husband to carry on their misbehaviour.

As far as the development in a country is concerned the extent of obstructive nature and resistance emerging as a result of slum communities, unauthorized urban dwellers, becomes clear when the outcome of similar research are analysed. In one hand the distribution and selling of drugs happening within illegal gangs. Besides, these gangs provide required assistance for family members to involve in other social menaces while also equipping younger generation with illegal habits, ways of spying etc., within the existing sub culture so as to create similar gang operators within the next generation as well. Furthermore, within the said environment those operations have been a challenge for varied rehabilitating institutions, legally based protective measures.

Below mentioned case studies also provide necessary information to understand the lifestyle of gang members' wives.

Table 5

Case Number	Information
Case one	“ I am a pavement hawker selling vegetable and fruits which are collected from the Manning market. My entire effort is to earn an income to educate my children. My children are highly talented in their studies. In the morning they go to school only after a cup of tea. Rice is cooked only for the dinner”.
Case two	“Husband has joined a gang and involved on various mischievous things. His daily earnings are used for drinking. Also has the habit of going for prostitutes. I know these things. Even after returning home he used to consume drugs”.
Case three	“I had to be in jail for 14 days as police raided our house and found some packets of drugs when my husband the damned fellow was out from home”.
Case four	“Though my husband doesn’t give even 5 cents I want to educate my children. I have three children and I accompanied with this man due to my perverseness”.
Case V	“Returns home every day middle of the night as a drunkard. Children born to us are similar to the steps of a ladder. With influence of liquor he attacks me my children in the night. Finally no other solution than separating from him. But I am still with him because of my children”. Case

Source: Field Survey

According to the case study these facts could be identify:

- Wives supporting illegal activities involved by their husbands while taking part of same.
- Some other wives struggling to find better future for children while opposing unethical activities occupied by their husbands.
- Silent women who have accepted whatever outcome as a result of their destiny.

The chart mentioned below tries to reveal how the behaviour of gangsters as a husbands impact to change the role and behaviour of their wives, by comparing to the ordinary husbands and wives who lives in the main society.

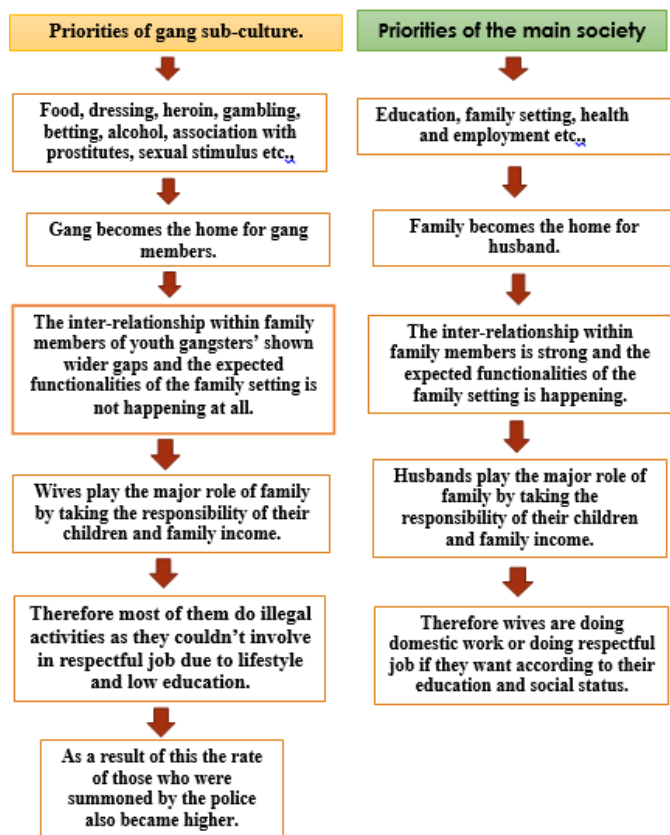


Fig 9

According to this chart we can understand that family income

become the main factor for wives of gangsters to do illegal acts thus their husband neglect their gender role in the family system. Some thoughts are there to say, income poverty is the main course for disorganized family settings. Yet the famous sociologist Oscar Lewis in his studies (1950s) saw that poverty is not merely a lack of adequate income, but rather as a way of life handed down from generation to generation through well-defined social networks (Lewis 1959, 1965). This theory holds that the, unethical behavior of family structures, personality features characterized by feelings of insecurity and dependence, attitudes of fatalism and lack of concern for the futures are among the features attributed to the culture of poverty and social disharmony.

As mentioned earlier too, the particular family environment of children becomes the main feature for them to follow mis-behavioral life patterns and to continue the poverty based living. This has proved by various sociological, psychological and criminological studies. Children who follow their parents be keen on to practice unethical behavior, personality features, and dependable attitudes. For a child since his infant ages the role of mother becomes a vital phenomenon and the concept of family enters the society through unit called family and it’s inter-relationships between mother, father and the child. In this regard the strong affiliation of qualitative and emotional feelings in a family, be supported through in-depth relationship between mother and father, and the linkage between parents and the children which becomes extraordinary.

**Conclusions**

Gang is a common group who share common interests and who defend each other within their group. Almost all of them are involved / engaged in socially unacceptable lifestyles and practices; some of which are criminal by definition. It was a special feature that the gangsters maintaining strong relationship with the gang they have associated with. The true factor therein was the members could manage their emotional depressions while reaching their objectives via own gangs. Hence, they didn’t want to associate with social systems in practice within larger society or to join the value setting of same. In line with this practice no special bondage could find between the responded youth and the family system. All those married or unmarried youth considered their family is the gang. They have defined family as the house in which they

could spend the night, whereas, married parties consider family of which they could access for meals as well as sexual desires. Other than the above the gang youth do not have particular concern on basics elements to affirm family bondage.

The outcome of the research identified the income poverty is the main course for disorganized family settings. One visible feature among these families was that the majority of wives have had involved in varied unethical behaviors with the concession and permission of their husbands. The women have made up their minds to act accordingly to resolve domestic cash flow gaps as well as to look after the children. What is disclosed below is the reflections of interviewed youth on the income earning methods being practiced by their wives. This proved that the direct influence as well as the fashion of the lives of gang youth as husbands have invented their wives to involve in illegal and unethical actions. Children in these families didn't have childhood. So juvenile delinquency is common among those children. In all the youth ganging culture in urban Sri Lanka affect for the changes of their wives behavior and role.

### Recommendations

- a. Avoid/reduce social and environmental factors for gang forming  
Eg: **CPTED**
- b. Establish and maintain Law and Order appropriately
- c. Strengthen and improve the government structure, obtain support from non-governmental organizations to design and implement programs aiming the protection of children and youth
- d. Implement and monitor above practices at GN division level and employ necessary measures to protect families and society
- e. Establish and maintain improved opportunities for education, employment and other social and individual needs for low income community's people living in slums and sanities, street children etc.
- f. Community awareness through schools, government agencies, NGOs, Police etc.

### Benefits & implications

10 Sub Inspectors received research experience as field research officers in civil. They could access various important information about gangs, their memberships, behavioral pattern, activities involved and geographical distribution. Also a network was established among the police stations in Colombo urban zone and a data base was developed. Above has helped to reduce criminal gang activities within the research area

### Acknowledgment

The researchers highly appreciate the realistic decision made by the Sri Lankan Police and the Ministry of Defense, Sri Lanka to deploy 10 Sub Inspectors (SIs) support the research in civvies, attached to several police stations within Colombo urban zone.

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