

Socio-Demographic and Perpetrators Experience in Committing Crime: A Descriptive Study on Male Young Offenders Undergoing Community Service Order

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Abstract – *The present study attempts to identify the underlying socio-demographic and perpetrators experience in committing crime among male young offenders undergoing community service order. An observational cross-sectional approach was applied using self-administered survey among young offenders. A total number of 60 respondents were recruited from Malaysia Department of Social Welfare to participate in this study. For this research, the sample criteria are male young offenders aged between 18 to 21 years old. Written and signed consent form were also given to the respondents to obtain their agreement prior to their voluntary participation in the research. The self-administered survey consisted of two main sections. Section one contained questions on socio-demographic of the young offenders while section two queried information regarding type of crimes, weapon usage, factors associate to commit crime, factors contributing for successfully executing criminal acts, factors associates to failure in committing crime and how they were caught. Data were compiled, organised and analysed using SPSS version 23.0. Results indicates that despite living with their family, young person involves in crime acts. This study suggest to examine family factors that contribute to the perpetrator experience to involve in crime in Malaysia. Copyright © 2016 Penerbit Akademia Baru - All rights reserved.*

Keywords: Socio-Demographic Profile, Perpetrators, Crime, Male, Young Offenders

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Crime is an act of breaking rules forbidden by law which poses a serious concern to worldwide society, including Malaysia. Male and female aged between 18 to 21 years old comprised roughly 18% of the total population in the year 2014 [1]. According to the Malaysia Department of Social Welfare a total number of 332 young persons aged between 18 to 21 years old has involved in crime in year 2014 [2]. A large majority of this population involved in property related crime (burglary and theft), people related crime and drug abusive.

Extensive studies on crime has shown that criminal acts is associated with dynamic risk factors such as aggressiveness, poverty, parental attitudes favourable to substance use and violence, poor family bonding and family conflict, truancy and dropping out of school and delinquent peers [3]. Moreover, many research from Western countries have delved that age of first arrest has significant correlation with criminal recidivism [4].

1.1 Community Service Order in Malaysia

Imprisonment is not the best solution to rehabilitate young person who involved in crime. Thus, in 2007 community service order was introduced in Malaysia as an alternative form of punishment as stated in section 293 (1) (e) of the Criminal Procedure Code (Act 593) for young offenders aged between 18 to 21 years old [2]. A stand-alone division was set up in February 2007 and by January 2008, this order was officially implemented in Malaysia as a penalty for minor crimes and first time offences for young offenders [2].

Community service order is a meaningful platform for young offenders to re-define themselves as contributors to community by providing hours of meaningful services such as housekeeping, maintaining public buildings, catering, landscaping, minor repairs and maintaining cleanliness of recreation areas such as playground and field [2]. Empirical research has concluded that there are four advantages in implementing community service order including; (i) it is less costly and more flexible than punishment given in prison, (ii) it helps to integrate young offenders into the community, (iii) it can reduce recidivism rate and (iv) it enhances the concept of rehabilitation [5-6].

1.2 The Present Study

Many research from Asian and Western countries have delved in the field of crime involving offenders undergoing community service order. Despite Malaysia being a part of Asian countries there is less literature available on young male offenders undergoing community service order. Thus, there is an urgent need to perpetuate an empirical study in order to advance the understanding of Malaysian young offender's profile who is undergoing community service order.

Drawing on diverse sources of data, a modest number of prior research on crime was conducted among juvenile offenders (less than 18 years old) and adult offenders (more than 21 years old). Comparatively, less is known about nature of young offenders and their experience involving in crime. Thus, this study aims to extend the literature by utilizing an enriched sample of male young offenders in the age range between 18 to 21 years old.

In addition, the study among young offenders has frequently been addressing from the paradigm of the risk and protective factors without taking into account on modus operandi aspects. Of important notes, the present study explores the socio-demographic profile and perpetrator experience in committing crime among Malaysian male young offenders. Furthermore, an empirical assessment would contribute to the body of knowledge of the relevant discipline such as social work, psychology, legislation and criminology.

2.0 MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present study applied an observational cross-sectional approach for data collection. A total number of 60 young offenders undergoing Community Service Order (CSO) were recruited from the Malaysia Department of Social Welfare to participate in the study. As a part of selection criteria the sampling frame takes into account of male young offenders aged between 18 to 21 years old. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality, a written and signed consent form were given to respondents to obtain their agreement prior to their voluntary participation in the study. An averaged time between 20 to 30 minutes were taken by each respondent to complete the questionnaire.

2.1 Measures

A set of questions were developed based on literature on crime. The result demonstrated a good Cronbach alpha value of 0.76.

Section A: This section gathered socio-demographic information of the respondents including age, sex, ethnicity, religion, marital status, educational status, occupational status, parents marital status, current living status, number of siblings and crime history among family members.

Section B: This section contained six items of perpetrator experience in committing crime which includes types of crime, weapon usage, factors associates to committee crime, factors contributing for successfully executing criminal acts, factors associates to failure in committing crime and how they got caught.

2.2 Analysis

Data were organised, entered and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Descriptive statistic was employed to summarise the socio-demographic and perpetrator experience in committing crime. The results were presented using graphical presentation.

3.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

In this section the socio-demographic profiles of 60 male young offenders is presented (Table 1). All the respondents are Malaysians in the age range between 18 to 21 years old with a mean age of 19.08 years. In terms of ethnicity, Malays formed the majority of young offenders. It is important to note that 95% of respondents are single with Upper Secondary as their highest educational status (75%). It is also apparent that majority of respondents are unemployed. As regards to parental marital status, 76.7% of respondent's parents live together. Based on the result, 63.3% of respondent stay with their parents and siblings. Moreover majority of respondents has three to four siblings (48.3%). Furthermore, 86.7% respondents doesn't have any crime history among their family members.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profiles of Male Young Offenders (n = 60)

Variables	n
Age	
18 years old	27 (45%)
19 years old	9 (15%)
20 years old	16 (26.7%)
21 years old	8 (13.3%)
Sex	
Male	60 (100%)
Ethnicity	
Malay	49 (81.7%)
Chinese	7 (11.7%)

Indian	3 (5%)
Others	1 (1.7%)
Religion	
Islam	49 (81.7%)
Buddha	6 (10%)
Christian	2 (3.3%)
Hindu	3 (5%)
Marital Status	
Single	57 (95%)
Married	3 (5%)
Educational Status	
Primary school	2 (3.3%)
Lower Secondary (Form 1 – Form 3)	9 (15%)
Upper Secondary (Form 4 – Form 5)	45 (75%)
Pre-University/Matriculation	1 (1.7%)
Skills Certificate	3 (5%)
Occupational Status	
Student	12 (20%)
Full Time	14 (23.3%)
Not Working	24 (40%)
Part Time	10 (16.7%)
Parents Marital Status	
Living Together	46 (76.7%)
Divorced	10 (16.7%)
Separated	2 (3.3%)
Others	2 (3.3%)
Current Living Status	
Parents + Siblings	38 (63.3%)
Alone	6 (10%)
Mother + Siblings	10 (16.7%)
Fathers + Siblings	3 (5%)
Friends	2 (3.3%)
Others	1 (1.7%)
Number of Siblings	
1-2	6 (10%)
3-4	29 (48.3%)
5-6	18 (30%)
7-8	6 (10%)
9-10	1 (1.7%)
Crime History among Family Members	
Yes	8 (13.3%)
No	52 (86.7%)

The present finding on socio-demographic profiles shows that majority of respondents aged 18 years old. The similar findings were noted in studies done in United States which explained that age is correlated with criminal acts. According to age-crime curve, the prevalence of offending increases in early adolescence (18 years old) and peaks in middle adolescence (25 years old) [7]. Malays formed the majority of young offenders undergoing community service order. This is a reflection of the majority ethnic group in Malaysia [1].

As regards to marital, educational and occupational status, the majority of respondents were not married and has completed their Upper Secondary school. Moreover 40% of respondents are unemployed. The involvement of single people who is unemployed into criminal activities is due to need of money and interaction with high-risk peers [8]. Based on parental marital status 76.7% of respondent's parents are married and staying together. Interestingly, majority of respondents involved in crime acts despite staying together with their family members. Poor parental monitoring is perhaps the strongest predictor factors that contributes to children involvement in criminal activities [9].

Despite living with parents and siblings 63.3% of respondents have involved in crime. A possible reason to committee crime is due to lack of parental support because 76.7% fathers and 45% of mothers are working full time and they has less time to interact and pay attention to their children's daily activities [10]. Majority of respondents has three to four siblings. Similar result was obtain in previous studies done in Western countries. The more children's in a family, the greater risk to involve in antisocial activities because parents couldn't not assist their children's daily activities [11].

3.2 Perpetrator Experience in Committing Crime

Several perpetrator experiences were obtained and presented in Table 2. In this section the types of crime, weapon usage, factors associate to commit crime, factors contributing for successfully executing criminal acts, factors associates to failure in committing crime and how they were caught are reported and discussed accordingly.

Table 2: Types of Crime (n = 60)

Variable	n (%)
Types of Crime	
Drug	7 (11.7%)
Drug + Traffic	1 (1.7%)
Traffic	15 (25%)
Stealing	11 (18.3%)
Stealing + Drug	2 (3.3%)
Stealing + Traffic	1 (1.7%)
Stealing + Robbery	1 (1.7%)
Stealing + Snatch Theft	1 (1.7%)
Stealing + Robbery + Snatch Theft + Drug	2 (3.3%)
Robbery	2 (3.3%)
Snatch Theft	10 (16.7%)
Snatch Theft + Drug	1 (1.7%)
Rape	2 (3.3%)
People Related Crime	2 (3.3%)
Weapon/Fire Arms	1 (1.7%)
Weapon/Fire Arms + Rape	1 (1.7%)

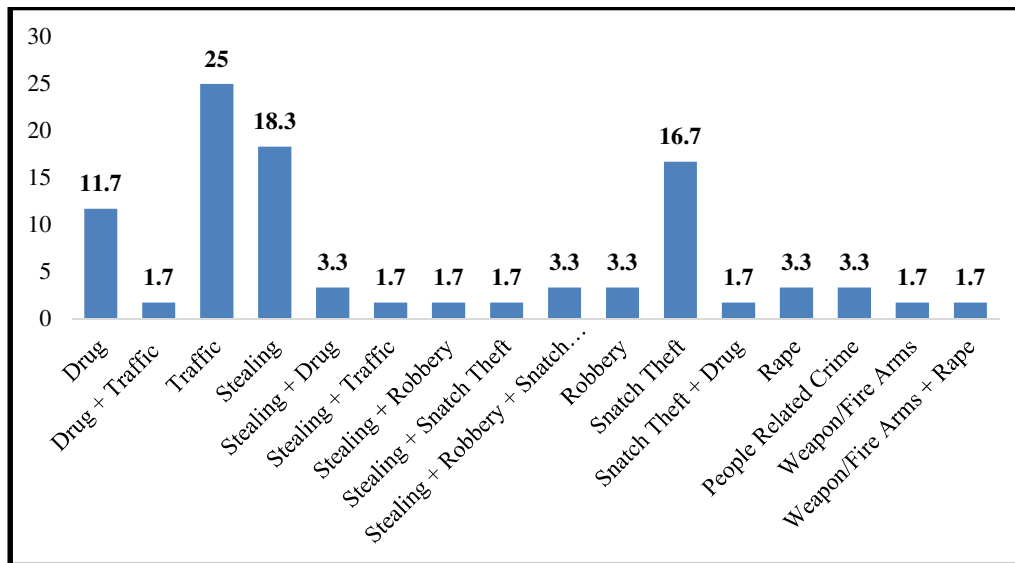


Figure 1: Type of Crime

3.2.1 Types of Crime

The higher prevalence of respondents involved in traffic crime (25%), stealing (18.3%) and snatch theft (16.7%).

In this study, based on perpetrator experience in committing crime majority of respondents have involved in property crime. Theory of crime explains that the desire to gain material such as money or expensive belongings leads to property crime [12].

Table 3: Weapon Usage (n = 60)

Variable	n (%)
Weapon Usage	
Sharp Objects	3 (5%)
Sharp Objects + Master Key	1 (1.7%)
Sharp Objects + Machete	1 (1.7%)
Sharp Objects + Screw Driver	1 (1.7%)
Sharp Objects + No Weapon Was Used	1 (1.7%)
Master Key	5 (8.3%)
Master Key + Bolt Cutter	2 (3.3%)
Master Key + No Weapon Was Used	1 (1.7%)
Machete	3 (5%)
Bolt Cutter	1 (1.7%)
Knife	5 (8.3%)
Knife + No Weapon Was Used	1 (1.7%)
Knife + Machete + Master Key	1 (1.7%)
No Weapon Was Used	33 (55%)
Others	1 (1.7%)

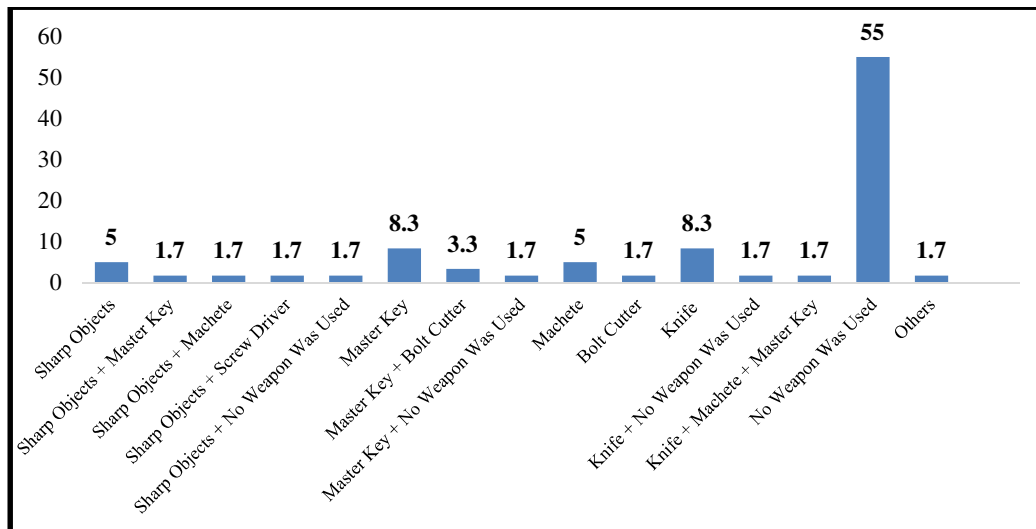


Figure 2: Weapon Usage

3.2.2 Weapon Usage

Of the entire sample, it was observed that around 55% of respondents did not use any weapon to execute crime; whereby 5% of respondents used master key and knife as their most preferred weapon to involve in criminal activity.

From the present findings it is understood that when gun and firearms are restricted, master key, knife and machete were more prominently used as tools to execute crime [13]. Moreover, this is also due to easy availability of knife over firearms [13]. Furthermore, in Malaysia there are still lack of security enforcement to control people from bringing sharp weapons.

Table 4: Factors Associate to Commit Crime (n = 60)

Variable	n (%)
Factors Associates to Committee Crime	
Pay Debt	1 (1.7%)
Pay Debt + Peer Influence	1 (1.7%)
Pay Debt + Self-Satisfaction	1 (1.7%)
Pay Debt + Need Money + Self-Satisfaction	2 (3.3%)
Peers Influence	7 (11.7%)
Peers Influence + Un Employed	5 (8.3%)
Self-Satisfaction	17 (28.3%)
Self-Satisfaction + Peer Influence	5 (8.3%)
Self-Satisfaction + Peer Influence + Un Employed	1 (1.7%)
Buy Drug	2 (3.3%)
Buy Drug + Need Money + Self-Satisfaction + Peer Influence	1 (1.7%)
Need Money	8 (13.3%)
Need Money + Self-Satisfaction + Peer Influence	3 (5%)
Need Money + Un Employed	1 (1.7%)
Need Money + Peer Influence + Unemployed	1 (1.7%)
Un Employed	2 (3.3%)
Others	2 (3.3%)

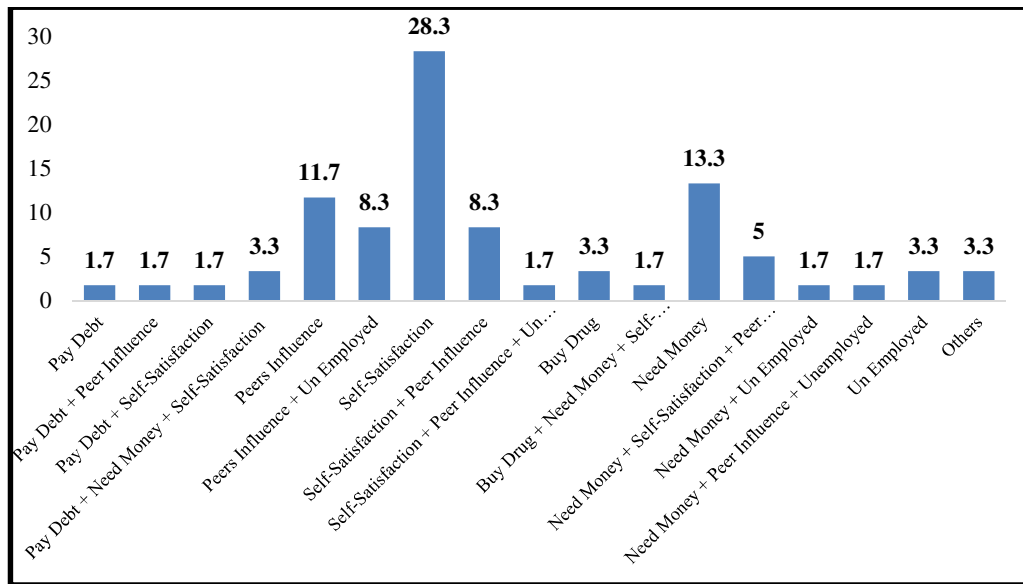


Figure 3: Factors Associate to Commit Crime

3.2.3 Factors Associate to Commit Crime

As shown in Table 4, the majority respondent's committed crime due to self-satisfaction (28.3%), desperate need of money (13.3%) and peers influence (11.7%).

Majority of young offenders involved in crime due to self-satisfaction, desperate need of money, peer influence and unemployment. The factors associate to commit crime is similar to previous national studies done in Hong Kong [14]. Moreover, tendency of psychopathic personality disorder also leads an individual to involve in crime [14]. Furthermore, based on rigorous empirical research individual factor, local friendship networks and unemployment brings a significant impact for young people to commit crime [15].

3.2.4 Factors Contributing for Successfully Executing Criminal Acts

As for factors contributing for successfully executing criminal acts, eight main factors were identified. Based on the responses of young offenders, earnestly done (35%) seemed to be more prevalent than well planned (28.3%) and managed to escape from being caught (11.7%).

Table 5: Factors Contributing for Successfully Executing Criminal Acts (n = 60)

Variable	n (%)
Factors Contributing for Successfully Executing Criminal Acts	
Managed to Escape	7 (11.7%)
Earnestly Done	21 (35%)
Earnestly Done + Managed to Escape	3 (5%)
Earnestly Done + Well Planned	5 (8.3%)
Earnestly Done + Well Planned + Managed to Escape	1 (1.7%)
Well Planned	17 (28.3%)
Well Planned + Managed to Escape	2 (3.3%)
Others	4 (6.7%)

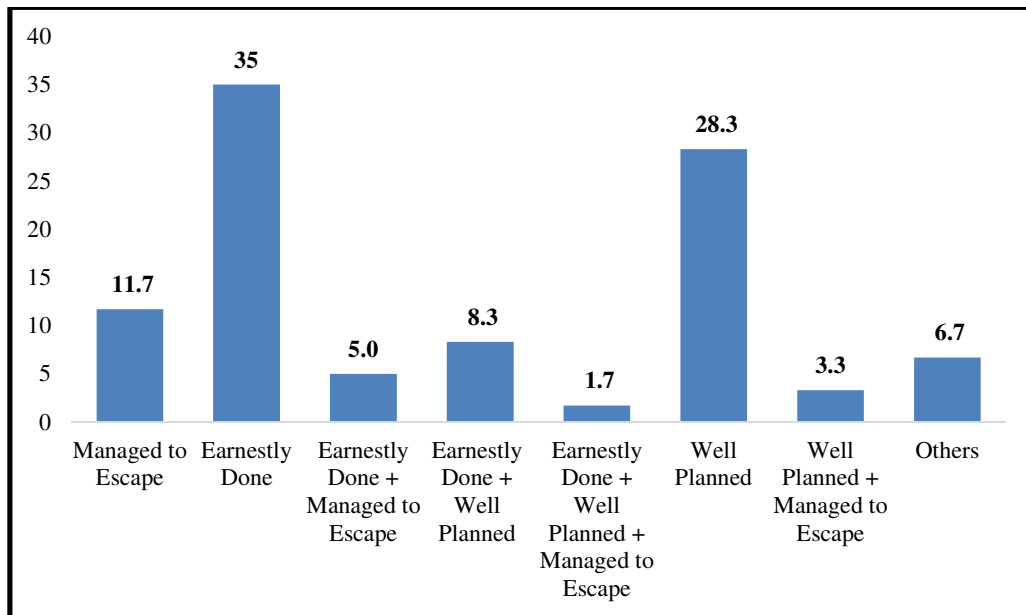


Figure 4: Factors Contributing for Successfully Executing Criminal Acts

It is documented that majority of Malaysian young offenders successfully commit crime because it was earnestly done, well planned and the perpetrator managed to escape from being caught. According to the available literature, a well-planned crime has high potential to succeed [16].

3.2.5 Factors Associates to Failure in Committing Crime

The details on factors associates to failure in committing crime were also obtained from the respondents themselves. Majority of young offenders admit that they failed to committee crime due to no luck (46.7%), failure to escape from being caught (23.3%) and police were aware of their criminal activities (11.7%). Factors associate to failure in committing crime are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Factors Associates to Failure in Committing Crime (n = 60)

Variable	n (%)
Factors Associates to Failure in Committing Crime	
Public Are Aware	1 (1.7%)
Police Are Aware	7 (11.7%)
Didn't Managed to Escape	14 (23.3%)
Didn't Managed to Escape + Police Are Aware	1 (1.7%)
No Luck	28 (46.7%)
No Luck + Police Are Aware	2 (3.3%)
No Luck + Didn't Managed to Escape	4 (6.7%)
Others	3 (5%)

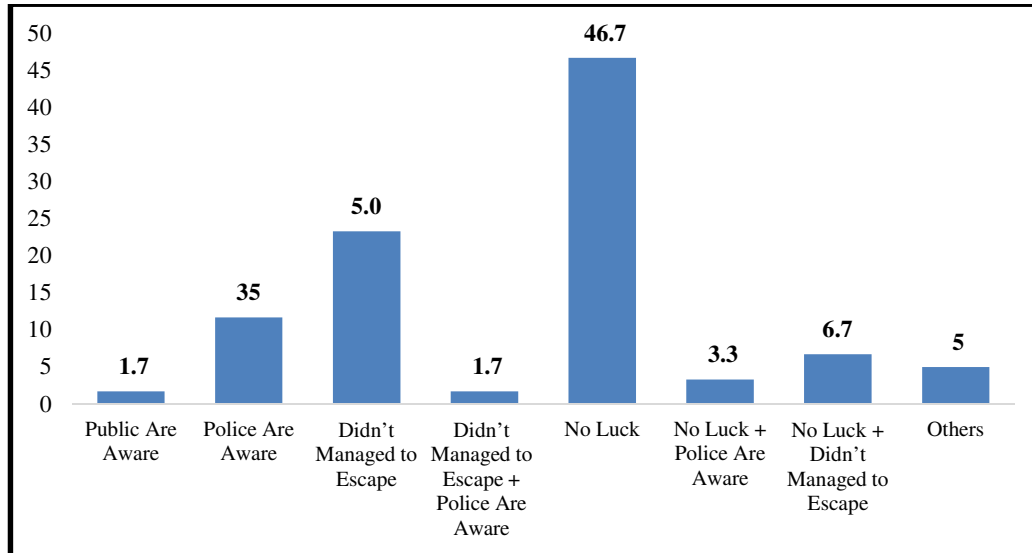


Figure 5: Factors Associates to Failure in Committing Crime

In this study failure to escape from police encounter and bad luck is associate to failure in committing crime. The present study is accordance with the available literature that conclude that an un-planned crime has higher potential to failure [16].

3.2.6 Caught By

Table 7 portrays how young offenders were caught. Majority of respondents were caught by police (38.3%) whereby 20% of respondents were caught by police based on the information given by their own friends. Moreover, 10 of the respondents were caught by public.

Table 7: Caught By (n = 60)

Variable	n (%)
Caught By	
Public	10 (16.7%)
Public + Family Informed Police	2 (3.3%)
Police	23 (38.3%)
Police + Public	5 (8.3%)
Police + Family Informed Police	2 (3.3%)
Friend Informed Police	12 (20%)
Family Informed Police	2 (3.3%)
Others	4 (6.7%)

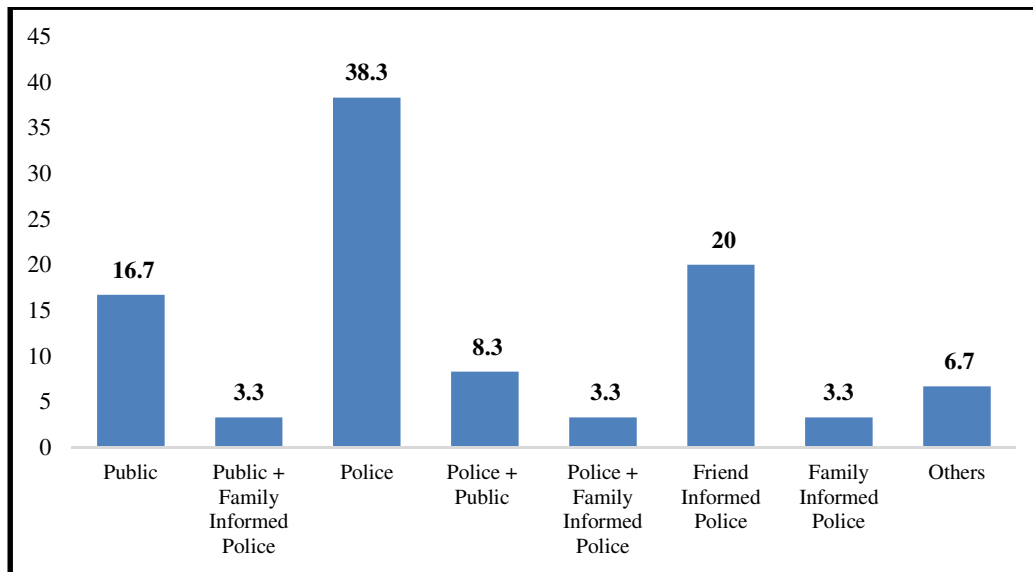


Figure 6: Caught By

Generally, respondents are caught by police, friend informed police and public informed police. Based on the findings the role of friends, police and public is widely acknowledged in preventing crime from occurring.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The present study is the first national research that was conducted among Malaysian male young offenders undergoing Community Service Order. Based on the analysed profiles, it is hoped that the finding will be useful for police department, welfare officer and other criminal justice authorities to help them in identifying people who are at-risk to become perpetrator. Besides, government agencies and non-government agencies need to collaborate together to prevent young people from involving in crime and reintegrate them into society to become a productive citizen.

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