

**THE EFFECT OF ALCOHOLISM IN THE
FAMILY ON YOUNG OFFENDERS**

BY

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SUMMARY

The effect of alcoholism in the family on young offenders

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Alcohol abuse in families remain a serious problem in South Africa. Early exposure to dysfunctional family patterns may contribute to juvenile offending. Such an exposure will be detrimental to children's development and may create emotional problems for them. It would appear that certain factors contribute towards juvenile delinquency such as divorce among parents, single parent families, unemployment of parents, family violence, substance abuse and poverty.

The researcher was motivated to undertake this study as she observed in the field of Social Work that nearly all juvenile offenders were exposed to alcoholism in their families of origin. The question arised whether there is a relation between alcohol abuse in the family system and juvenile delinquency.

The goal of this study was to explore the extent to which alcohol abuse in the family system may contribute towards juvenile delinquency and imprisonment. The researcher conducted a qualitative study through which the goal of the study has been achieved. Further research in this field is recommended to prevent the effect alcohol abuse may have on the family system.

The following are the key concepts in this study:

- Alcohol abuse
- Alcoholism
- Family system
- Dysfunctional family
- Juvenile delinquency

OPSOMMING

Die effek van alkoholisme in die gesin op jeugoortreders

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Alkoholmisbruik binne gesinsverband bly 'n ernstige probleem in Suid Afrika. Vroeë blootstelling aan disfunksionele gesinspatrone kan lei tot jeugmisdaad deurdat dit nadelig is vir enige kind se ontwikkeling en aanleiding kan gee tot emosionele probleme. Dit blyk dat sekere faktore soos egskeiding, enkelouergesinne, werkloosheid van ouers, gesinsgeweld, substansafhanklikheid en armoede, tot jeugoortredings aanleidng kan gee.

Die navorser is gemotiveer om hierdie studie te onderneem nadat sy in die veld van Maatskaplike Werk waargeneem het dat bykans alle jeugoortreders binne hulle gesinne van herkoms, aan drankmisbruik blootgestel was. Die vraag het ontstaan of daar 'n verband bestaan tussen alkoholisme in die gesinsisteam en jeugmisdaad.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om te eksploreer tot watter mate alkoholmisbruik in die gesinsisteam aanleiding gee tot jeugmisdaad en gevangenisskap. Die navorser het 'n

kwalitatiewe studie gedoen waartydens die doel van die studie bereik is. Verdere navorsing in hierdie veld word aanbeveel ten einde die effek van alkoholmisbruik op die gesinsisteem te voorkom.

Die volgende is kernbegrippe van die studie:

Alkoholmisbruik

Alkoholisme

Gesinsisteem

Disfunksionele gesin

Jeugmisdaad

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Chapter 1

General orientation

1.1 Introduction

Understanding the impact of alcoholism in the family on young offenders, is a serious issue in South Africa. There has been a lack of research on the function and the effects alcoholism may have on South African families and whether or not it contributes towards juvenile delinquency. Bartollas (1993:262) says that some observers of social life events, argue that the family as a social unit, no longer functions in a useful manner. Family problems affecting young people badly which include divorce and single-parent families, “blended families”, out-of-wedlock births, homelessness, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and violence.

Through this study, the researcher tried to the knowledge base of alcoholism and juvenile delinquency. The researcher aims to explore further whether alcoholism within the family system, may contribute towards delinquency among juveniles and as a result of it, imprisonment.

1.2 Motivation for the choice of the study

Various factors motivated the researcher to facilitate this research study in order to search for possible explanations for the high occurrence of juvenile delinquency in alcoholic families:

Through the researcher's under-graduate and post- graduate studies, there had been various issues the researcher discovered. One of these is that there is limited South African literature regarding alcoholism and the way it may contribute towards juvenile delinquency.

The researcher works for the Department of Correctional Services where she renders social work group programmes to the sentenced young offenders. The researcher became aware of these young offenders' vulnerability and traumatic backgrounds, which include alcohol abuse within their families.

Social problems within the researcher's community also served as a strong motivation for the research. These include alcohol abuse, family violence, divorce, and the alarming rise in the number of street children who usually end up in conflict with the law.

1.3 Problem formulation

Alcoholism can transform the whole family system into a dysfunctional entity. Such families focus on problems, addiction, trauma or secrets, rather than on the needs of the children. Young people whose family members experience substance-abuse problems, suffer from neglect,

economic hardship and even abuse in these family settings (Bartollas, 1993:266).

The researcher agrees that it is important to understand juveniles' family systems and socialization processes, in order to understand their delinquent behaviour. Through the researcher's experience, it seems as if alcohol abuse has a certain function in the family system as a way to prevent the disintegration of the family. Although this is not always a healthy way to maintain the family system, it is a way the family decided to use as a surviving mechanism.

Children from such families may adapt to the symptoms of alcohol abuse and carry them along as a way of life. They may identify with the abusive patterns as a coping mechanism, which can lead to other dysfunctional patterns such as criminal activities. They might also do anything, including resorting to criminal activities to obtain alcohol. The researcher views socialization as the process by which one acquires social skills to participate effectively in the society in which one lives and through which one feels accepted and special. The researcher believes that the way in which children relate to other socializing agencies, is partly influenced by the family of which the child is part of.

When the family fails to socialize its members, other socializing agencies such as gangs, become important in the lives of these members as a way to help them survive in society. This could result in turning to criminal activities.

Glanz (1994:16) agrees that there are apparent factors, which lead to delinquent behaviour among young people, especially originating from within their family systems. These factors include family dysfunction (broken homes), parent–child relationships, absent parents (single parent families), substance abuse by parents, poverty, unemployment, truancy, violence and abuse.

The researcher believes that alcoholic parents often cause children to experience anxiety and confusion. There is a higher risk of alcoholism, abuse of illegal drugs and juvenile delinquency among these children. The problem can be formulated through the creation of the following statements:

Alcohol abuse by parents/significant others within families may have a negative effect on young people, which might influence their choice of involvement in criminal activities.

Young people might identify with alcoholism as a pattern of behaviour in their families of origin, which may help them to survive.

Children living with alcoholics often identify with unhealthy living patterns, which may lead to juvenile delinquency. They may not have the opportunity to experience trust towards themselves and others, or learn how to deal with painful feelings. Juvenile delinquency can become a way of dealing with these feelings.

Children of alcoholics who lack coping skills are at a higher risk for school drop-out, failure, depression, anxiety and alcohol and drug abuse, which may lead to juvenile delinquency and imprisonment.

The problem being researched concerns young children who come from alcoholic families and who end up having difficulty coping under pressure and who might end up being imprisoned for criminal offences.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

1.4.1 Aim

To explore the effect of alcoholism in the family system on young offenders.

1.4.2 Objectives

1.4.2.1 Literature study

To create a knowledge base for this research process through a literature study regarding:

- Alcoholism in the family system and the effect it may have on children in the family system.

Juvenile delinquency as a phenomenon.

1.4.2.2 Empirical study

To explore through an empirical study, the way in which juveniles could identify with the patterns of alcoholism from within their family

systems, and how such patterns of behaviour contributed towards juvenile delinquency and imprisonment.

1.4.2.3 Conclusions and Recommendations

To construct conclusions and recommendations on the findings of the research.

1.5 Problem statement

There is very little information available about the impact alcoholic parents or significant others may have on juveniles, including the way in which it may influence their involvement in criminal behaviour.

Any research study, which seeks to explore a certain theme, does not utilize a hypothesis. Hence, there are no dependent and independent variables during the research study. The researcher will formulate a problem statement for the research since an exploratory research design is being used. The researcher's intention is to establish research findings on a completely new theme where no research was previously conducted.

A problem statement can thus be formulated as follows:

Alcoholism in the family system may contribute towards juvenile delinquency and imprisonment.

1.6 Research approach

The contents of this entire study will be qualitative of nature, meaning that the researcher will conduct a literature study before the empirical study.

The researcher will also focus on the participants' responses towards whether alcoholism within their families, contributes towards juvenile delinquency. In this case, respondents will be responding to the questions directed towards them through semi-structured interviews regarding the abuse of alcohol by their parents/significant others and the way it might contribute towards their involvement in criminal activities and as a result of it, imprisonment. Leedy (1993) in De Vos (1998:150) states that qualitative research deals with data that is principally verbal.

1.7 Type of research

The researcher will make use of applied research during the study. Smit (1994:4) is of the opinion that applied research is a systematic way of gathering knowledge, emphasizing the practical value or application thereof.

Through this study, alcoholism in the family system as well as the way it may influence young people in that family, will be explored as well as the extent to which alcoholism may contribute towards the imprisonment of these young people.

De Jong, Monette & Sullivan (1990:6) reinforce this opinion by stating that the identified characteristic of applied research deals with practical phenomenon of most crucial social issues.

1.8 Research design

De Vos & Fouche (1998:76) describe a research design as a blueprint or a strategy according to which data is collected to investigate the research hypothesis or questions. It specifies the unit of analysis, sampling procedures, data collection techniques and measurement's procedures. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) also explain that the purpose of an exploratory research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, person or community.

The researcher will utilized an exploratory research design during the research process to explore the way in which alcoholism in their families may contribute to the behaviour problems experienced by young people, as well as the way it may lead to juvenile delinquency.

1.9 Research procedures and strategy

1.9.1 Research Procedure

The researcher will conduct semi- structured interviews with the respondents. A semi- structured interview is a useful technique to use during an explorative research process as it helps to clarify concepts and problems as well as creating possible answers or solutions to a problem (Bless & Higson- Smith, 1995:110).

Through a semi- structured interview, the researcher will present specific themes to the respondents with alternatives or sub- themes to explore the problem. The researcher will interview twenty (20) respondents in the process of data gathering.

1.9.2 Strategy

Semi- structured interviews will be conducted among respondents who are detained at Rustenburg Juvenile Centre in the North West Province. The researcher will interview the respondents individually in a secure and private office in the prison. All the juveniles should be assessed by the social workers during their initial admission.

1.10 Pilot study

According to De Vos (1998:395), pilot studies are designed to determine whether or not the measuring instrument is applicable to a certain group of respondents and are being carried out in similar settings to those in which the investigation will be conducted (Neuman 1997:195). Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:50) further state that a pilot study involves testing the actual program on a small sample taken from the community for whom the program is planned. It will also help to determine the effectiveness of the intervention as well as to identify which elements of the prototype may need to be revised (Rothman & Thomas in De Vos 1998:396).

The pilot study will consist of the following elements: a literature study, consultation with experts, an overview of the feasibility of the study and

pilot tests of the schedule for the semi-structured interviews. It can be discussed as follows:

1.10.1 Literature study

Jansen & Vithal (1997:14) state that a good literature study helps to initiate a more professional problem formulation of the research study. The researcher will explore alcoholism in the family system and juvenile delinquency. Both South African and international literature will be consulted. The researcher will make use of the Academic Information Centre of the University of Pretoria.

1.10.2 Consultation with experts

Interviews were conducted with various experts in the different fields of specialty in the Department of Correctional Services and the field of substance abuse as preparation to the study. The following experts, were consulted by the researcher:

Mrs. Judith Shopley, the director of the SANCA Information and Resource Centre (library) in Auckland Park (Johannesburg). She works as an expert in the field of substance abuse and shared her views with the researcher regarding the effect alcoholism may have on the family system and specifically the way it may contribute to juvenile delinquency.

Mr Steven Tlala, chief social worker at the Department of Correctional Services in the Odi prison. He was consulted regarding the detention of young offenders. He broadened the researcher's perspective

through an explanation of the problems these young offenders face, especially those relating to their family systems.

The researcher also attended most of the Gauteng Substance Abuse Forum meetings during which personnel from SANCA clinics and other organisations involved in the field of alcoholism, attended. The latter included the following systems: The SAPS- Gauteng, Traffic Department- Gauteng, Department of Correctional Services- Gauteng, medical practitioners and journalists. Together they discussed current issues pertaining to alcohol abuse and the effect it has on South African families. During these meetings, very useful information was gained for this study.

1.10.3 Overview of the feasibility of the study

The researcher works for the Department of Correctional Services and one of her job descriptions is to render social work group programmes to young sentenced offenders. The study will be feasible because of the fact that the researcher is already involved with juvenile offenders. This makes it easier for the researcher to get respondents for the study.

The researcher has identified the following factors as the ones that will contribute to the success of this study:

- The respondents will be drawn from existing client caseload in the prison.
- The researcher can reach the respondents with ease.

- Permission will be sought from the respondents.
- The researcher will bear all research costs.

Problems anticipated in this study are as follows:

- Some of the juveniles may refuse to participate in the research.
- Some of the juveniles may be released before the interviews are completed.

1.10.4 Pilot test of the semi- structured interview schedule

Five (5) respondents will be interviewed to test the effectiveness and practicality of the instrument used. The effectiveness and practicality of the instrument refers to the relevancy of the themes in the interview schedule, the language used, the length of the instrument and formulation of the themes and sub-themes. Mindel (1993:238-240) states that the measuring instrument should be evaluated before it is administered to a sample of individuals, who are similar to the study's sample or population, to determine whether the individuals understood the questions the way the researcher intends them to.

1.11 Population sample and sampling technique

1.11.1 Universe or population

Neuman (1997:202) describes the universe or population as follows: “The large pool of the population which has an important role in sampling. Sometimes the term universe is used”.

Powers, Meenaghan & Toomey in De Vos (1998:190) define a population or a universe as a set of entities for which all the measurements of interest to the researcher are presented.

According to the researcher the population is the total set of individuals from which the unit of the study is chosen. It can be a totality of events, organizations or case records, with which the research problem is concerned.

The study will focus on juveniles in the Rustenburg Prison in North-West Province as the population of the study.

1.11.2 Sample

De Vos (1998:192) defines a sample as the subset of measurements drawn from the population. This is to understand the whole population from which the sample was drawn (Neuman 1997:202). The type of sampling procedure which the researcher will utilize is non-probability sampling, which means that the respondents in the study do not have the

same probability or chance of being selected (Bless & Higson–Smith 1995:95).

A sample of male juveniles ranging in age from sixteen- (16) to twenty-one- (21), will be the respondents in the study who can speak and understand English as a communication language. Only juvenile offenders who have been assessed during admission by the prison social workers, will be used in the study. Purposive sampling as an example of non–probability sampling will be used which indicates that there is a specific purpose for that sample to be chosen from the total population.

1.12 Ethical considerations related to data collection

During the study the researcher will focus on certain ethical issues, which will be considered during the data collection phase. These ethical issues include, among others, privacy or voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality (Bless & Higson- Smith 1995:102). Ethical guidelines are essential in research since they serve as standards and the basis upon which each researcher ought to contineously evaluate his or her own conduct.

To ensure that these ethical issues are considered during this study, a consent form will be provided to each of the respondents to be filled in prior to the interview. These ethical issues will include the following:

- **Harm to subjects**

There is no known medical risk associated with the study. The respondents may experience stress when being interviewed because of the emotional or sensitive nature of the study. To ensure that stress is minimized, the researcher will ensure that the respondent's stress is acknowledged and the pace of the interview be controlled by how the respondent is able to handle the stress involved.

- **Informed consent and voluntary participation**

The researcher will obtain written consent from the respondents after a detailed explanation has been given about the purpose or goal of the study, data collection strategies, credibility of the researcher and how the research findings will be utilized. They will also be informed about their rights to withdraw from the study at any point of time, should they wish to do so.

- **Anonymity**

The researcher will inform the respondents about their rights to remain anonymous and that their names will not be disclosed in the scientific report. The researcher will refer to the respondents as anonymous in the research report.

- **Confidentiality**

The respondents will be informed by the researcher of their rights to confidentiality during the interviews. They will be assured that the data

collected from them during the interviews, will only be used for the stated purpose of the research and that no other person will have any access to the data collected. All information gathered will be dealt with in confidentiality.

- **Counselling**

The researcher will engage the respondents in debriefing sessions if necessary once the investigation is completed. The debriefing will be the responsibility of the personnel who are already involved with the juveniles as counsellors.

1.13 Definition of key concepts

1.13.1 Family system

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2002:24) define a family system as more than only a collection of individuals, but instead, a whole larger than the sum of its parts. This means that an individual's behavior needs to be understood within the context of the family system. They refer further to the following regarding the behavior problems of the individual in the family system:

Within such a family framework, the individual's disturbed or troubled behavior (anxiety, depression, alcoholism, an eating disorder) is seen as representative of a system that is faulty, not due to individual deficit or deficiency. That person's current

difficulties might then be viewed more accurately as signaling a social system in disequilibrium.

The above statement supports the researcher's view that the behaviour of the juvenile also need to be understood within the context of his family system.

1.13.2 Alcoholism

Biggs (1994:84) describes alcoholism as a primary, chronic, hereditary and eventually fatal disease that progress from early physiological susceptibility into an addiction characterized by tolerance changes, physiological dependence and a loss of control over drinking. Deutsch in De Beer (2000: 43) defines alcoholism as follows:

Alcoholism is an illness characterised by loss of control over drinking, which results in serious problems in any of the following areas: job, school, or financial affairs; relationships with family or friends; or physical health.

According to the researcher's opinion, alcoholism is a behavioural disorder, with severe medical, psychological and social implications. The use of alcoholic beverages will inevitably interfere with the successful life of a person. That person will either not be able to realize or recognize this effect or will not be able to control his/her alcoholic consumption, even when he/she knows its negative effects.

Alcoholism is also noticed when a person starts to use defence mechanisms such as withdrawal, denial, arrogance, rage and perfectionism. By doing this, alcoholics are trying to escape from reality, while at the same time telling themselves that they have nothing to be ashamed of.

According to the researcher's opinion, the alcoholic person's personal, spiritual, financial and emotional well-being will always be negatively affected by the alcohol abuse.

1.13.3 Alcohol Abuse

Barker (1991:9) describes alcohol abuse as a consumption of alcohol, in such a way as to harm or endanger the well-being of the user or those with whom the user comes into contact with by causing accidents or being physically abusive. The researcher adds that such people can also encounter problems in their social relationships. According to the researcher, alcohol abuse can be described as the misuse of alcohol, resulting in one or more problems for the drinker. These problems can be psychological and include depression, which can either be an acute or chronic illness. Problems may also be social, such as family or work problems.

According to the researcher, alcohol abuse does not necessarily involve alcoholism. For instance, a person's alcohol abuse can be of such nature that he/she can become destructive without necessarily developing the kind of dependency usually associated with alcoholism.

The researcher believes that alcohol abuse can lead to alcoholism. This simply means that if a parent or significant other of the child develops a certain pattern of drinking that might lead to a disease, the parents' responsibilities of taking care of their children can be affected. This may contribute to a family breakdown and problems such as dropping out of school and involvement in criminal activities, which might result in imprisonment. Stafford (1994:22) also refer to substance abuse, in particular alcohol abuse, that it will effect so many people in so many ways, that no researcher or person from the helping professions can overlook it.

1.13.4 Juvenile Delinquency

Barker (1991:124) defines juvenile delinquency as anti-social actions by juveniles, which are regarded as criminal in nature if committed by adults. The researcher adds that it involves illegal behaviour by a person in most jurisdictions, under the age of eighteen (18) years who has his or her behaviour adjudicated as delinquent in the juvenile court. It encompasses offences such as homicide, robbery, rape and theft. Regoli & Hewitt (1997:32) define juvenile delinquency as a behavior by a minor child under the age of eighteen (18) years, that violates the state's penal code. Juveniles delinquency also involves a child who has committed many offences of a serious nature over an extended period of time. The same author refers to a delinquent as someone who adopts certain modes of hairstyles, dress codes or actions that oppose the standards set by those in authority.

According to the researcher, juvenile delinquents are treated differently to adult criminals in most countries, including South Africa. This is because they are seen as less responsible for their deviance and that their illegal behaviour has not yet taken on a more permanent pattern. On the contrary, the researcher assumes that if these young people's deviant behaviour is left untreated, they might experience serious problems which may include clashes with the law. They might also be at a very high risk of carrying the problem over to their adulthood.

1.14 Contents of the report

Chapter 1: General orientation.

Chapter 2: The effect of alcoholism in the family on young offenders.

Chapter 3: Juvenile delinquency.

Chapter 4: Empirical investigation.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 2

The effect of alcoholism in the family on young offenders

2.1 Introduction

According to different authors, such as Rocha- Silva et al. (1996:26) and Anderson (1993:5), children are being exposed to a wide variety of chemical substances, which are relatively available in the entire society. Many children seem not to venture further than their homes to gain access to intoxicating substances.

Since there is a lack of information concerning the extent to which alcoholism affects young people and particularly those in Black families, the researcher thoroughly explores in this research, the extent of this phenomenon.. The findings of the study will hopefully fill the gap on how alcoholism in the family affects young person's lives, particularly those who end up in trouble with the law.

Stafford (1994:10) defines alcoholism as a dysfunctional condition, with negatively affects on the person's physical, social, emotional, psychological or mental and spiritual functioning. Furthermore the researcher indicates in this chapter the way alcoholism disturbs not only the life of the drinker, but also the functioning of the whole family

system which has dramatic and detrimental effects on the development of children of these families. Alcoholism has been known profoundly to be passed on from one generation

to the other (Rocha-Silva et al. 1996:5). De Beer (2000:42) states that alcoholism has been for many years a problematic phenomenon in society.

A contributing factor to the destructiveness of alcoholism is that the addictive nature of alcohol is not recognized in its fullest. It is therefore not perceived as a destructive drug and is also freely available (Rocha-Silva 1998:52). Furthermore, Rocha-Silva states that three to six people's lives are negatively affected by a single person's alcohol abuse. Alcoholism is also perceived as the third most frequent health problem in the world.

The researcher will refer in this chapter to the occurrence of family disintegration, unemployment and other social problems related to alcoholism. Unfortunately, most families would prefer not to acknowledge that they are being faced with a detrimental situation of alcoholism. In these families, talking about a member's alcohol problem would violate a cardinal rule, which is 'we don't reveal secrets of the family'. It is as if acknowledging the drinking issues would threaten the family's existence (Stafford 1994:26).

The alcohol problem will continue to exist, for as long as the alcoholic problem in the family is protected by other family members as a way to protect the family from stigmatisation. The researcher strongly

emphasizes that most families who are negatively affected by alcoholism won't easily come out of their shells due to the way the society perceives alcoholism. Stafford (1994:2) supports the latter statement:

The single greatest hurdle to bringing the effects of alcoholism into the open is the stigma attached to it in our society. We continue to isolate and castigate the alcoholic for his lack of self-control and blame him for exhibiting the symptoms of what we now know to be an identifiable and treatable illness. We do not blame the diabetic for his failure to produce insulin in sufficient quantities, nor do we refuse him treatment until he does so. Yet, with alcoholics, we use a prime symptom of the illness (loss of control), as evidence of his untreatability and the alcoholic is blamed for his apparent weakness character.

Rocha-Silva (1998:59) adds to the above quotation by stating the following:

The traditional tendency among South African researchers and treatment agencies to define, for example, the "alcoholic" or alcohol dependent as a sick person who (necessarily) has some defect (which means he cannot and will not ever be able) to control his drinking, has come to be severely criticized.

Rocha-Silva believes that the growing body of research findings on dependency or addiction may vary over time and place. The researcher also suggests that more focus should be placed on the findings and the use of proper procedures and techniques for treating alcoholism, so as to minimise its effects on children.

However, the researcher believes that if alcoholism is treated as a symptom and the addicted person is not labelled as a sick person, the stigma can be ended and the whole family could be encouraged to find recovery and support in a more professional manner. An in-depth definition and meaning of alcoholism will now be discussed.

2.2 Definition of alcoholism

Throughout the years, different authors have provided a wide range of definitions of alcoholism. Most of the literature refer to alcoholism as an illness, not a character defect or weakness (Stafford 1994:2). Mostly, it is believed that if an alcoholic practised self-restraint and controlled his drinking habit, then all would be well. The alcoholic then does not need to understand the reason for his/her drinking pattern.

Although alcoholics are mostly stigmatised, the truth is, they come from all social classes and races and are usually in the employment sector and can also become parents. According to Lewis et al (1994:2) they are just drink too much, often neglect their responsibilities and their drinking pattern and the resultant behaviour from it, can be successfully treated.

According to the researcher alcoholics only need encouragement and patience from those who are supposed to provide support. That might act as a catalyst for alcoholics to acknowledging that they have a problem. Those responsible for support could be their families, immediate friends, employers or the entire community.

Deutsch in De Beer (2000:43) defines alcoholism as follows:

Alcoholism is an illness characterized by loss of control over drinking, which results in serious problems in any of the following areas: job, school, or financial affairs; relationships with family or friends; or physical health.

Beck et al. (1993: 2) identifies alcoholism as an impaired control of use and that it is considered more serious than alcohol abuse. On the other hand, Lewis et al. (1994:2) define substance abuse as the intake of mood-altering drugs such as alcohol, which has undesired effects on the person's life or on the lives of others. According to the researcher the negative effects of alcohol abuse may involve the impairment of physiological, psychological, social, spiritual, financial or occupational functioning. The abuse of alcohol does not necessarily imply that the person is an alcoholic. A person might drink too much at a time, but still have control over his behaviour. A person reaches the stage of alcoholism when he is totally addicted or dependent on a substance such as alcohol. At such a stage, physical and psychological symptoms of withdrawal or tolerance to the substance are present.

Alcohol abuse is mostly known to have major effects on the physical health and social functioning of the drinker. In addition, it plays a role in many of society's most pressing concerns, including accidents, violence, criminal behaviour, family problems and productivity loss in the workplace. Lewis (1994:2) agrees that alcohol abuse affects so many people in many ways, that no researcher can overlook it.

2.3 PHASES OF ALCOHOL DEPENDENCY

According to the E.M Jellinek's theory of alcoholism, there are various phases, which alcoholics go through before they reach the stage of dependency. Stafford (1994:22) describes the phases of alcohol dependency as follows:

Pre- alcoholic phase

This phase is normally referred to as a stage characterised by a social drinking pattern, which means that the person only drinks to relax. The latter does not concern other people, as the person is still in control of his/her intake of alcohol.

- **Early alcoholic phase**

During this stage, heavy and more frequent drinking is experienced. The drinker may experience first blackouts, he/she may become defensive about his/ her drinking pattern and may even feel guilty about it. During this stage, the characteristic of sneaking of drinks may emanate. The

drinker may again experience secret drinking or morning drinking.

Tolerance and withdrawal symptoms are experienced during this stage.

Addiction phase

At this stage, the drinker is completely addicted to alcohol and physical dependency is experienced. There is also a severe loss of control over the drinking pattern and serious financial and relationship problems can be experienced. All these problems become a reasonable excuse for their drinking pattern.

Chronic alcoholism

This stage defines an inevitable deepening slavery to alcohol that wrecks lives and culminates in death. It is a stage where vital organs such as the liver, heart and the brain are seriously damaged (Benshoff & Janikowski 2000:59).

The development of alcoholism is influenced by various aspects such as the personality and circumstances of every human-being (Potter-Efron 1991:22). For instance, children might develop deviant behaviour due to the negative influence of their parent's drinking patterns; on the contrary, others may suffer from negative peer influences. It is mostly the choices each individual will have to make that will determine whether they will be affected or not.

Another factor that might influence the negative impact of alcoholism in families is the cultural variation in child-rearing practices, including the use of physical force. Children with deviant behaviour may be viewed as

personal failures by their parents, which may lead to feelings of depression, helplessness, and rage against the child. This can result in substance abuse by these parents, especially alcohol, in the hope of relieving stress (Straussner 2001:18).

Alcoholism may threaten a family's stability. Boyd et al. (1995:27) say the following about it:

Family structure is related to socio-economic status and, undoubtedly, to other aspects of the quality of family life; nonetheless, it is not the key element in the development of adolescent alcohol abuse and other deviance. Rather, the quality of parental socialization is the important predictor of adolescent outcomes - namely, nurturing parents who monitor the whereabouts of their children and have open lines of communication are more likely to have adolescents with fewer problem behaviours than alcoholic families, regardless of their socio-demographic and family structural conditions.

The family's context may influence the choices of friends. Alcoholism as one of the different forms of social problems affecting the child-rearing process, may be seen as a symptom of a more particular problem within a family system. Children who grow up in such environments, may end up identifying themselves with the roles their parents or significant others played in their lives. Since families are the primary place in which children learn to socialize, it is most likely that these children will

identify with the different roles their parents play in their lives and will most definitely influence their peer relationships. Children from an alcoholic background have more chances of showing deviant behaviour than those from a non- alcoholic background (Stafford 1994:23).

The World Health Organization differentiates between the physiological alcohol dependency and psychological alcohol dependency (De Beer 2000:43). These two forms of alcohol dependency can be defined as follows:

- **Physiological alcohol dependency**

A distinct physiological condition occurs when the alcohol drinker reaches a stage of deterioration. This condition is characterized by withdrawal symptoms, which might last for a few weeks or months. Withdrawal symptoms might range from light to more severe shakings, fever, unfounded fear, aggression, muscle pain, convulsions, stomach-aches, fatigue/ tiredness, diarrhoea, sweat, insomnia and poor concentration abilities. When individuals become addicted to alcohol, they are no longer able to control their alcohol-drinking patterns. This addiction and physical symptoms can lead to death. The physiological effects of alcoholism are categorized into three parts and can be described as follows:

- (1) **Early effects**

The earliest effects of alcoholism occur in the brain. There is a serious damage of brain cells and various mental processes are affected such as

perception, coordination, motor functioning and memory loss can also be experienced.

(2) Later effects

Long-term alcoholism destroys the vital organs such the brain, liver, heart and pancreas. This stage greatly increases the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer and it also interferes with the immune system, leaving the body vulnerable to many opportunistic diseases.

(3) The dead end

The eventual outcome of chronic alcoholism is death. Death might result from failure in functioning of the vital organs, accidents or suicide. Death may also result from chronic diseases such as cancer.

- **Psychological alcohol dependency**

Psychological dependency is defined as a strong need or craving for alcoholic substances. When the alcohol drinker experiences psychological dependency, physiological symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, restlessness, depression and insomnia will be experienced for weeks. Physiological dependency and psychological dependency of alcohol are interrelated.. A person who is physically sick, will also experience some unfinished business with regard to his/her emotional functioning. According to the researcher, alcohol dependency may affect a persons emotional functioning in the sense that it is a symptom of a deeper problem, which impacts negatively on the addicted person's body and soul. It reaches beyond the boundaries of the drinker into his social

world and affects all who come into close contact with him/ her, especially family members.

Once engaged, family members may also become the symptom carriers and may be greatly harmed, despite the fact that no alcohol ever passed their lips. Understanding the psychological and emotional effects of alcoholism within the family system cannot, however, be done in isolation of the social context in which it manifests itself. Therefore, it is crucial that alcoholics must not be treated in isolation from their other family members. One family member can not entirely carry the blame for a dysfunctional family system. Family members are in a mutual interaction of moulding each other's emotional and psychological behaviour (Stafford 1994:32).

Alcoholism has always been a family problem. Where there are alcoholics, there are immediate family members, relatives, and friends who are affected by the alcohol related behaviour. The manner in which alcoholism affects the family system will now be discussed.

2.4 The impact of alcoholism on the family system

According to the researcher, an alcoholic person cannot be seen and treated in isolation. Members of the family influence each other and are also influenced by the events taking place in their social context. When one member of the family develops a substance abuse problem, it is not only limited to him/her alone, but affects the entire family system (Benshoff & Janikowski 2000:148). At the same time, the family system

has a reciprocal effect on its stability and change towards the problems experienced. The system that tends to be most widely recognised as closely associated with addictive behaviours, is the family (Lewis, et al. 1994:143). There are a variety of factors which upset the structure of the alcoholic family. According to De Wit in De Beer (2000:75) such factors can be discussed as follows:

- **Long- term conflict between parents**

In families where alcohol abuse is present, parents might end up getting involved in constant conflict situations and children might intervene and this can contribute negatively towards the developing process of these children. Furthermore, these children might identify themselves with the aggressive behaviour of their parents and constantly get themselves into similar behavioural patterns.

- **Parental non- involvement with the children**

Some parents do not show interest in the activities in which their children are involved, either being educational or social activities. Owing to their alcoholic behaviour, most of their time is spent on feeding such a behaviour rather than getting involved in their children's lives. They would rarely bother to find out more about their children's emotional, social, psychological and spiritual well - being.

- **Parental unpredictableness**

While under the influence of alcohol, parents become unpredictable in their behavior. They may behave with aggression which would be the

opposite of what they will do when they are sober. On the other hand, they may be more calmed down while under the influence of alcohol. As a result, they set double standards through this type of behaviour and confuse their children.

- **Lack of discipline**

In alcoholic families, there is often inadequate supervision and discipline. When parents are under the influence of alcohol most of the time, children tend to take advantage of the situation. They think that they may do whatever they wish, because their parents don't see them or do not care about them. If only one parent is constantly under the influence and the disciplining and supervising of the children is the responsibility of only one parent, this can be a frustrating and exhausting exercise. Therefore, it is most likely that children end up making wrong choices of friends and becoming involved in criminal activities due to lack of proper supervision and discipline.

- **Tension mounting circumstances in family ties as a result of financial pressure**

A family system may undergo a phase of economic tension due to unemployment, resulting in poverty. The researcher would like to agree that when parents experience financial pressure, they may alienate their parental responsibilities by resorting to substance abuse, alcohol in particular, and finally develop a lack of cohesion within the family structure including the spouses and children.

The researcher would like to emphasize that alcoholism poses a serious threat towards child-rearing within the family system. Levy & Rutter (1992:57) support the latter statement by indicating that children including newborns and infants, are very often abandoned by their alcoholic parent(s). They further state that grandparents, especially grandmothers, have to care for their grand children after their parents abandoned them because of drug dependency. This can result in children starving and families disintegrating because parents spend all their money to support their addictions (Lewis et al. 1994:59).

2.3.1 Phases of the alcoholic family

Van Wormer in De Beer (2000:74) describes different phases of the alcoholic family. These phases are namely: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. They can be discussed as follows:

- **Phase 1: Denial**

This is an early stage of family alcoholism and it is characterised by denial. This behaviour is often a reaction to indicate that the family system experiences the alcoholism as a painful experience. In this case drinking episodes are minimised, rationalised and any discussion about alcoholism is avoided. Most often during this phase, family members experience no great adjustment in their roles and expectations because of the alcoholic's drinking behaviour (Washousky et al. 1993:38).

Most alcoholic families do not accept that they have a problem. The family members deny the reality of alcohol abuse in their family and the

disturbed feelings coupled with such an abuse. In most instances the reason for denial is that the drinker often couples his/her periods of drinking and sobriety. As a result, it makes it difficult for the family to acknowledge the parent/ spouse's drinking habit as a problem.

Stafford (1994:26) states that the entire family system denies the problem, possibly because family members do not want to admit that one of them is an alcoholic or because they perceive alcoholism as a reflection upon themselves.

- **Phase 2: Anger**

During this phase feelings start to surface. Anger is the most predominant feeling that the alcoholic family can experience. Anger may be experienced by both the alcoholic and the family members who have the task of managing the alcoholic in the family system and is often experienced by all family members. In other instances family members will go as far as repressing their anger and others might even direct it towards themselves and start to hate themselves, for not trying harder to stop the alcohol problem.

- **Phase 3: Bargaining**

This phase can be characterized by efforts of negotiation with the alcoholic for solutions to the drinking problem. Family members make certain promises, threats and choices in order to control the alcoholic. The family may seek for a professional intervention such as family therapy. The therapist will ultimately facilitate the conversation during

the bargaining stage, which will likely lead to the resolution of the problem experienced.

- **Phase 4: Depression**

Alcoholism or alcohol dependency destroys marital relationships and any other forms of family life. The alcoholic family completely loses all hope and give up on everything it has as a family. While going through such a process of change, the alcoholic family still needs to maintain its stability at the end. Although there are symptoms of stress and depression within such a family, change can only be allowed to that extent that the family maintains its stability (Snider 1992:15). The family thus needs to find another way to cope as a system without alcohol, which creates a destructive coping mechanism and may lead to depression experienced by either the alcohol abuser, the affected family members, or both.

- **Phase 5: Acceptance**

During this phase all the anger has passed. The alcoholic family is starting to make peace with its situation and it is unable to control the alcoholic's drinking behaviour. Everyone in the family is prepared to move on with their lives. Family members may adapt to new coping mechanisms of seeing alcohol abuse as "system- maintaining" in the sense that it provides the family with a way to sustain its customary patterns of interaction. Again, family therapists may also facilitate the process by encouraging members of the family to find other ways of coping as a system without alcohol.

2.3.2 Roles often played by children in alcoholic relationships

Children who grow up in alcoholic families are often pressurised to take care of their parents, in-stead of the other way round. These children grow up in stressful and painful circumstances and as a result, have too many responsibilities of taking care of the household and also ensuring their parent's emotional stability. Eventually their behaviour is channelled in such a way that they develop stereotypical roles and are forced to maintain them. Clayton (1995:100-122) describes the different roles often played by children in alcoholic relationships as follows:

- **Turtle- Grand Inquisitor Relationships**

Children from alcoholic families sometimes get wrapped up in a cocoon. The author indicates that the alcoholic parent often behaves like a Grand Inquisitor in this kind of relationships. These parent's behaviour is often recognised by witch-hunting and brings out the worst in their children. Their communication patterns may be characterized by elements of intimidation and as a result, this form of behaviour may push children away from their parents. These parents would ask their children double-bind questions, which imply that, whichever way they answer, they would still be in the wrong or guilty. Children then like a turtle, withdrawn out of fear and uncertainty and become too scared to say anything. This is also a way to protect themselves. Unfortunately, in most instances people may mistaken their silence as an admission of guilt. They are never trusted by anyone, and they may end up not trusting anyone too. In this relationship, children always think that they have

done something wrong to their parents and once that happens, the family's stability is threatened.

- **Parentified Child- Incompetent Parent Relationships**

The author describes the parentified child as one who behaves more like a parent than a child. This may be due to the fact that either or both parents behave incompetently. As a result of this, the child is forced to take on parental responsibilities. In some family systems children often have to play this role because of other forms of family dysfunctions, such as parental disability through an accident or a chronic illness. Whenever a parent is unable or unwilling to be a parent in the fullest sense, his/her child often need to take on the parental role as a way to make sure that the family system can be maintained.

In alcoholic families, the difference is that the parent is present but ironically also absent. The absence experienced by these children, is either emotional or physical neglect or both. The author also states that the parentified role is permanent, unless the alcoholic parent receives treatment and resumes his/her parental role. Children often try to hide their parent's addiction by taking on these roles without complaining. Despite all this, they may live under stressful conditions and may even carry these patterns over to their own adult lives. If they do not receive professional help to assist them to create other perceptions of family life, specifically about parental roles and responsibilities.

- **Warrior- Peacemaker Relationships**

This is a stressful and complicated relationship. The peacemaker is constantly trying harder to protect the warrior from other family members, while the warrior is secretly trying to protect the peacemaker from the alcoholic. The warrior always picks fights as a way to distract the alcoholic from his behaviour. This often happens when the alcoholic starts to behave in an irresponsible manner. In such instances the warrior would react as a way to withdraw attention from the alcoholic and everyone would focus their attention towards him/her. In such relationships, no one ever understands what is going on. Things are always hectic and confusing for everyone.

The warrior's behaviour might imply that there is an even deeper problem than what is being perceived. The focus might be given towards his/ her aggressive behaviour whereas subconsciously what is really troubling him/her, might be his parents/ significant other's alcoholic behaviour.

- **Hero- Rebel Relationships**

Children who act like heroes always want to protect their family system. They are great achievers and always want to be the best in order to carry the stress off the family (Stafford 1994:77). They do well in all the activities they are involved in. These children achieve high grades at school, performing well in sport or other extra-mural activities. However, they may try to forget about their family problems and rather focus on

their achievements. This can be just a way to disguise the alcoholic pattern in the family system.

On the contrary, rebels are children who take the stress off the family by doing something terrible or something wrong. Rebels draw the attention away from the family's primary problem of alcohol dependency through delinquency or other misbehaviour. They may be involved in all sorts of trouble such as being naughty at school, shoplifting, stealing from other people, abusing substances or even being sent to prison. Such behaviour is often a child's way of making an unconscious plea for help. While worrying about the rebel, the family's alcohol problem is temporarily forgotten.

Through their behaviour, heroes and rebels appear to be different but they are much alike especially concerning the roles they are playing within alcoholic relationships. In some families, children may even switch back and forth to the roles of a rebel and a hero throughout their lives. Again, children sometimes try in a subconscious manner to protect the family. That confirms to the researcher the lengths to which children will go to protect their families to ensure that their families do not disintegrate.

- **Clown- Serious One Relationships**

A clown in an alcoholic family always neutralizes the situation. In a relationship full of tension and pain, a clown can help alleviate the tension and also help the non- alcoholic parent to loosen up and, on the other hand, cover up for the alcoholic parent. Through this behaviour,

the child performing the role of a clown and distracts all the attention from the alcoholic family. Such children often hide behind masks, which they have to use to cope with the situation. They sometimes make fun out of their family miseries in order to relieve the pain and hurt they might experience because of the alcoholic problem.

- **Computer- Hysteric Relationships**

In these kinds of relationships, family members often complement one another. They meet each others needs in a reciprocal manner. Computers react on the basis of thinking or using their minds rather than feelings. In the case of the members of an alcoholic family, they don't like to feel because they know that some of their feelings are painful and they don't want to be hurt. In most cases they were taught from the early stages of their development that they don't have feelings and that it is acceptable to hide their feelings. In an alcoholic family, the children may channel themselves as computers and analyse their parents' drinking behaviour. At the same time they will come up with possible ways of covering up for their parents' mistakes.

Hysterics respond on the basis of feelings. They don't think, but rather express their explosive emotions. Thinking only gets them into trouble or they may have been criticized for their thinking abilities. The pattern of alcohol abuse by parents may lead children to respond in a hysterical manner. They may not have time to think because of the damage they experienced in living with alcoholic parents. These children may be locked into one role of controlling the damage done by their parents.

These roles are learned within family systems and unfortunately, they can be carried over into the adult world.

- **Psychosomatic- Rigid One Relationships**

Through this form of family relationships in an alcoholic family system, much damage can be done to the child's life. Family members apply excessive and rigid methods and solutions to problems. When one solution is not working, emotions escalate and the same solutions are tried over and over again. Consequently there is frustration and more stress, which often leads to acute depression. In this kind of relationships, there is often one member who will respond through psychosomatic symptomatic behaviour. This becomes a way in which a person deals with his/ her own stress of living with a rigid person. Family members experiencing psychosomatic symptoms, may suffer from ulcers, headaches, backaches, asthma, stomach- aches, anorexia, insomnia or hypertension. Psychosomatic disorders can be so stressful that they can be fatal amongst young people.

In an alcoholic family, the addicted parent often takes on the role of the psychosomatic as alcohol may end up causing him/ her physiological illnesses such as shakings, fever, muscle pain, convulsions, stomach- aches, fatigue/tiredness and diarrhoea. The affected family members including children, on the other hand, may try to adapt to the situation by applying rigid methods or solutions for dealing and coping with the situation.

- **Mascot- Lost Child Relationships**

Certain children respond in such a way that they distract attention from the alcoholic and the pain experienced within the family system. Often mascots are talented and act creatively. In the process of acting out their talents they have a primary goal of saving their families from the trauma rather than self-fulfilment (Stafford 1994:77). On the other hand there is the lost child who cannot find a way of competing with the mascot. These children deal with the pain of their families by withdrawing from everyone and everything within and outside their families. They do not identify with anyone since they are the ones with severe problems within their families.

The mascot in an alcohol family acts out the family's troubles in a humorous manner. This may be with the aim of diffusing tension within the family system and the mascot child may always be trying to suppress his/ her troubled emotions about the family problems by being funny. These children may sometimes make fun of their family situations, even to their friends. The lost child on the other hand, will fade into the background and avoid conflict as far as possible. Often the lost child experiences more damage because he/she is always in a state of withdrawal and preoccupied with private thoughts (Stafford 1994:77).

- **Switchboard- Clam Relationships**

When the family experiences too much tension, the switchboard pattern is commonly applied. The switchboard is often a child through whom the communication will be channeled. The clam at the other hand would be

the child who responds to the stress experienced by linking the rest of the family to the stressful issue. The two people in these roles never refer to feelings. The problem experienced in this relationship is that there is a circle of communication, which involves someone who is not directly affected by the problem. Eventually the switchboard and the clam relationship never solve problems.

In addition to the abovementioned roles, the researcher would like to indicate that children, who grow up in a home where one or both parents are addicted to alcohol or other illegal drugs, often think they are the only ones in such circumstances. Most of these children have never had the opportunity to speak to someone who might rescue them from the pain they experience. However, the researcher would also like to emphasize that there are many ways that these children could be assisted to express their pain and hurt. Rocha-Silva et al. (1996:1) refer to the following poem as an indication of how these children can express their thoughts and feelings regarding the way alcohol destroys their households:

Notoriety of liquor

I am the most powerful
chemical mixture of liquids

I have the potential power of
dividing many families into individuals

I am liquor, I am Joala

You started drinking me when
you said you want to forget your problems

You started drinking me occasionally
and now you are drinking me professionally

Watch out! You will end up
drinking me internationally

I am liquor, the water of mentality

I will make you brave

When you are a coward

I will make you talkative if you are shy

I will land you in danger

Gone are the days when young girls
used to cook like their mothers
but nowadays they drink like their fathers

I am existing everywhere
even in churches they drink me
in the name of Holy-communion

I will make you tremble

When you are moving along the street

I will make you shiver when you are standing

I am liquor, I am Joala...

By a 14 year-old youth

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the effects of alcoholism in the family on young offenders, is discussed. It focuses on how parent's addiction of alcohol affects children's lives and how it can result into delinquent behaviours. The researcher defines further the concept of alcoholism from the social perspective and how it affects families. The alcoholic family go first certain phases before getting to the phase of dependency.

During the dependency phase children are often forced to take over the responsibilities and tasks of their parents in order to keep the family system intact. The researcher also focuses on the different roles, which children of alcoholic parents adopt as part of the process to maintain the family system.

Chapter 3

Juvenile Delinquency

3.1 Introduction

Understanding criminal behaviour among young people is currently one of the burning issues in South Africa. Such behaviour among children resembles a complex phenomena since it encompasses many issues. Psychological, physical, social and genetic factors could contribute towards young children becoming involved in criminal activities.

During the development process, young people often experience inner conflict, self-doubt, exploration and even fear of the unknown. They also get easily excited, develop physical and mental capabilities, test societal norms and values, become exposed to strong peer influences, desire status and even search for a place in the larger society, beyond the family unit. Apart from their development process, these young people can often be drawn into delinquent activities that may be defined as inappropriate, extreme, shocking or completely unacceptable by their parents or society at large.

While involved in such malicious mischief, young people might end up being caught into a situation where there might not be an escape from the

law. They may discover that their lives are deeply affected and end up appearing before the juvenile justice system. They may be subjected to treatment, rehabilitation, punishment, or whatever corrective measures judged appropriate for them.

The above are issues that may contribute towards these young people becoming involved in criminal activities and ending up being in custody of the legal system. Such issues may vary from being minor, moderate to severe ones and may include experimenting, peer-group pressure and alcoholism by either or both parents.

In this chapter the focus is mainly on the social definition of juvenile delinquency rather than the legal explanation and the factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency which includes alcoholism as phenomenon.

3.2 Definition of juvenile delinquency

Considering the rough treatment handed out to children who misbehaved at home or at school, it should come as no surprise that children that who actually broke the law and committed serious criminal acts were dealt with harshly. Prior to the twentieth century, little distinction was made between adults and juvenile offenders. Although judges considered the age of an offender when deciding on punishment, both adults and children were eligible for the same forms of punishment-prison, corporal punishment and even the death penalty in some countries. In fact, children were treated with extreme cruelty at home, at school and by the law.

Over the years this treatment changed as the society became sensitive to the special needs of children. Beginning in the mid nineteenth century as immigrant youths poured into the United States, there was official recognition that children formed a separate group with their own special needs. These groups were known as child savers and were formed to assist children in need. The concept that children could be treated differently before the law can actually be traced to its roots in the British legal tradition. Early British jurisprudence held that children under the age of seven were legally incapable of committing crimes. Children between the age of seven and fourteen were responsible for their actions, but their age might be used to excuse or lighten their punishment. Since 1995 the legal system in South Africa recognised that many young people are incapable of making mature judgements and that responsibility for their acts should be limited. For example children can intentionally steal cars and know fully well that the act is illegal, but they may be incapable of fully understanding the consequences of their behaviour and the harm it may cause. Therefore, the law thus not punish a youth as it would an adult and rather sees youthful misconduct as evidence of unreasoned or impaired judgement.

Senna (2000:20) defines a juvenile delinquent as a minor child who has been found to have violated the penal code. Because of their minority status, juveniles are usually kept separate from adults and receive different consideration and treatment under the law. The author further stresses the fact that terminology is also different when one refers to the wrong doings of juveniles. He explains it as follows:

Adults are tried in court: children are adjudicated. Adults can be punished; children are treated. If treatment is mandated, children can be sent to secure detention facilities, but they cannot normally be committed to adult prisons.

Regoli & Hewitt (1997:32) define juvenile delinquency as a behaviour committed by a minor child, under the age of eighteen (18) years that violates the state's penal code. Those who socially define juvenile delinquency, consider such behaviour as a violation of norms and values (standards of proper behaviour) set by the controlling group, or those in authority. Juvenile delinquency involves a child who has committed many offences of a serious nature over an extended period of time. The social perspective holds the fact that juveniles are considered delinquents if they adopt modes of hairstyles, dress codes or actions that oppose the standards set by those in authority (Regoli & Hewitt 1997:7). Juvenile delinquency is also seen as any action by someone designated as a juvenile (a person under the age of 18 years) who is a non-adult that would make such a young person subject to action by the juvenile court.

According to the researcher, despite the definition of juvenile delinquency, not all young people committing criminal or inappropriate activities, are reported to the legal authorities and as a result, subjected to a legal juvenile court action. The researcher would like to emphasise the fact that in the South African context, actions such as truancy, running away from home, having fist fights, trespassing, having a sexual relationship with a person of the opposite or same sex or calling the

emergency number under false circumstances, are regarded as inappropriate. However, if all children were to be placed before the juvenile courts and found guilty of taking part in such activities, then nearly every child would be regarded as a juvenile delinquent because most children have once, if not often, took part in such activities during their developmental processes.

Young people are not supposed to be regarded as juvenile delinquents unless they have been through a trial and been found guilty by the juvenile court. There are different views in the world as to when a young person is to be considered a juvenile delinquent. The age of eighteen (18) years does not confirm that a person is a juvenile in all countries. The International proposed standard sets the minimum age limit at ten (10) years and the maximum age limit at eighteen (18) years for juveniles. In South Africa, the upper age limit in which a young person is to be brought before the attention of the juvenile court, is eighteen (18) years. Other countries use sixteen (16) and seventeen (17) years as the age limit (Kratcoski & Kratcoski 1990:3).

3.3 Incidence of Juvenile Delinquency

According to statistics in South Africa, it appears that one (1) out of three (3) young people are committing serious offences like rape, arm robbery, murder, housebraking and assault (Rocha-Silva 1998:53). When the court found them guilty, they have to serve a spcified term in the juvenile facilities in South Africa. These facilities are available in all nine (9)

provinces. The incidence of juvenile delinquency is a serious concern in South Africa as it rises daily at an alarming rate.

Senna (2000:44) indicates that crime rates can be influenced by a variety of social and economic conditions. The following factors are playing a major role in determining patterns and trends of crime:

- **Age**

Change in the age distribution of the population deeply influences crime and delinquency rates. Juvenile males commit more crime than any other population segment, so as a general rule, the crime rate follows the proportion of young males in the population.

- **Economy**

A poor economy contributes to higher crime rates. Youth from poor families leave their homes to look for opportunities to provide for their own basic needs. Because of their inadequacy, they end up committing crimes.

- **Drugs**

Drug use has been linked to fluctuations in the crime and delinquency rates. Drug abusers are particularly crime prone, so as drug use level increases, so too do crime rates. Drug abuse may also have a more direct influence on teen crime patterns, for example, when alcohol abusing kids engage in acts of senseless

violence. Users may turn to theft and violence for money to purchase drugs and to support their drug habits.

- **Other social problems**

As the level of social problems increases so too do crime rates. Increases in the number of single-parent families, dropout rates and teen pregnancies may also influence crime rates. Children living in single-parent homes are as twice as likely to be impoverished as those in two-parent homes. Such children are especially at risk to juvenile delinquency, foretelling an increasing crime rate.

3.4 Factors contributing towards juvenile delinquency

Researchers have been faced with the challenge of unfolding the real factors, which contribute towards juvenile delinquency. According to the researcher it is important to understand these factors before one can do a complete study of this subject. Emphasis must also be placed on the fact that it is difficult to verify that a particular characteristic or factor will always lead to juvenile delinquency. The uniqueness of the juvenile as well as the context in which the crime took place, should be emphasised in order to understand the factors that contribute towards juvenile delinquency.

Furthermore, the researcher would like to indicate that not all children who grow up in alcoholic or poor homes, become delinquents. If the factors that lead to juvenile delinquency could be identified with a high

degree of accuracy, the prevention and treatment of such behaviour of young people would be possible. Sonnekus (1994:46) identifies two main categories of these factors, namely personal and social-milieu factors. Both these categories may also be regarded as risk or trigger factors, which may contribute to juvenile delinquency. These two main categories will now be discussed:

3.4.1 Personal-milieu factors

Person-directed factors involve determinants in the nature and functioning of the criminal, which motivate his/her behaviour (Van der Hoven in Sonnekus 1994:46). Personal factors include the entire personality of the juvenile. The author, however, agrees that there must be an equilibrium between the study of the so-called 'normal' and 'abnormal' personalities since both of them could be regarded as extremes of the same continuum. The developmental phases of juveniles may also contribute towards juvenile delinquency. During this process, juveniles undergo some serious changes, which have an enormous impact on their personalities (Sonnekus 1994:47). The researcher would like to indicate that early experiences within the family will definitely contribute to the development of deviant behaviour patterns and antisocial personality traits. Karoly et al. (1998:3) indicate that the period of early childhood is highly important considering a child's unique- physical, emotional, mental and social development. It is a period where a child is exposed to both the opportunities and vulnerabilities within the social context. For example, children with a reduced level of parental stimulation or emotional support may also experience socio-emotional

problems in childhood that are associated with behaviour problems later in life. Further research on the juvenile delinquent's personality should be undertaken to create personally oriented etiology for juvenile delinquency (Sonnekus 1994:47).

3.4.2 Social- milieu factors

In order to understand the possibility of social-milieu factors contributing towards the development of juvenile delinquency, the entire personal world of the juvenile must be explored. That means that certain systems such as the family and the school, which are generally supposed to be associated with the prevention of crime should be seen as factors, which may possibly contribute to juvenile delinquency. According to the researcher, elements such as child neglect and abuse within families and the association with wrong school friends, may be seen as having some form of influence towards juvenile delinquency.

Holman (1995:44) agrees that children from large families are somewhat more subject to delinquency. Again, parents with many children should not be alarmed since it does not necessarily imply that all children from such families become criminals. According to Holman (1995:44) these children are at risk since parents with five, six or more children do find it more difficult to give their children enough attention and at the same time, are unable to control them. This author strongly emphasizes that, not only parenting style or parenting ability are important factors in moulding the life of a child, but also the family structure.

Kratcoski & Kratcoski (1990:116) indicate that a disrupted family structure may also lead towards juvenile delinquency. A family can be disrupted through the loss of a parent through death, desertion, separation or divorce, which can add to the vulnerability of the children and can also lead to delinquency. Children may also be faced with the problem of living in poverty due to a low income or a lack of family income and as a result of this, suffer malnutrition or health problems, which might limit their developmental process (Károlyy et al. 1998:3).

In general, children of the same age are subjected to pressure among each other, which may lead towards their involvement in criminal activities. Because of the pressure they might be experiencing, these children could commit crimes such as theft, robbery, assault, illegal drugs use, truancy and vandalism (Holman 1995:45). Most of the peer groups among juveniles, approve aggressive behaviour as acceptable as a way to protect themselves. Very often these children did not experience emotional security in their family homes, and learn to use aggressive behaviour as a way to protect themselves (Rose 1998:434).

The media have always been accused of fostering delinquency. Televisions, newspapers or movies at cinemas are all elements of media from which young people can imitate negative role models. Holman (1995:45) states that television is a more influential form of media than newspapers simply because it reaches almost every home. The author stresses the fact that television definitely has an influence on behaviour of children although it does not influence all children in the same way. Violent programmes have the most negative effect on children who

already have aggressive predispositions. In some cases children may already have violent tendencies and being exposed to forms of media such as television, may reinforce their hostile tendencies to copy criminal methods (Holman 1995:45).

Rose (1998:434) indicates that there are a variety of factors, which contribute to the increase of youth aggression. These include the increase in poverty, violence on television and movies that serve to model the unwanted behaviour and also the breakdown of the family structure. However, media are seen by many researchers to be the most contributing factor towards aggression, antisocial behaviour and disorderly conduct among juveniles in our society.

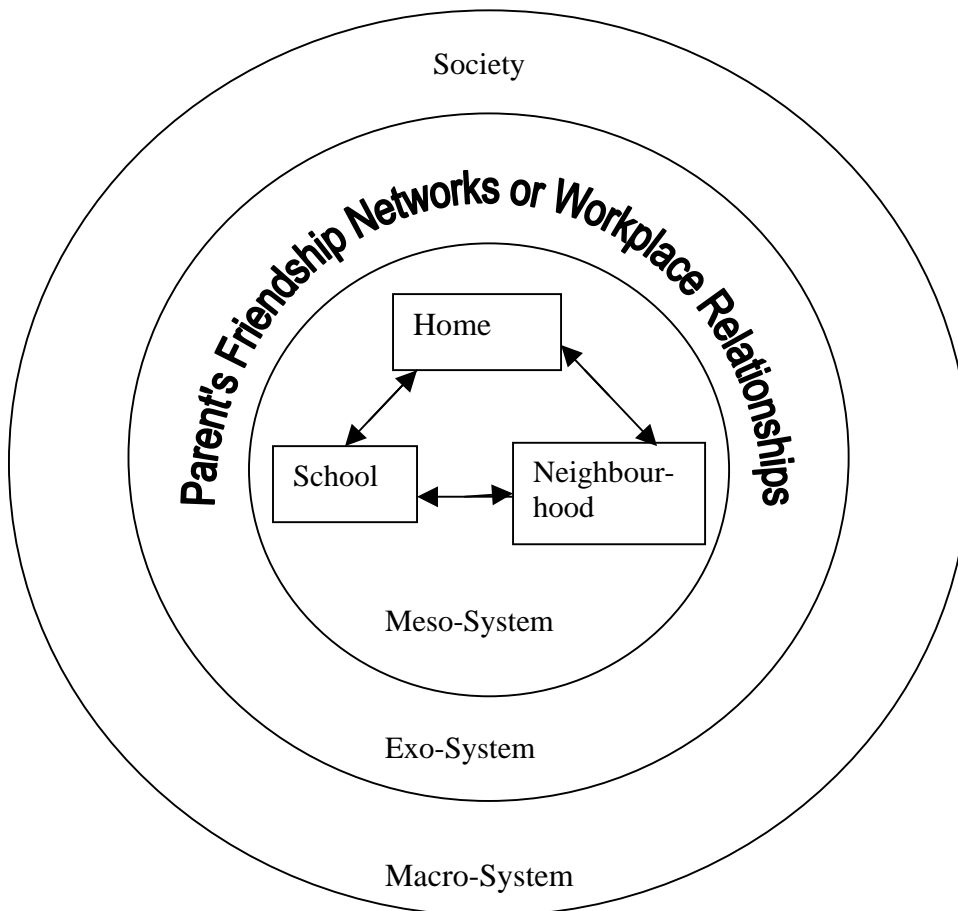
Horwath (2001:54) refers to a systems framework, which examines the mutual influence that the child, family, friends, neighbours, community and wider society have upon one another. It is a holistic model, which focuses on the ways in which children's developmental needs, the capacity of their parents to respond appropriately to those needs and wider environmental factors interact with one another over time. Bronfenbrenner in Horwath (1998:55) mentions the following:

Whether parents can perform effectively in child-rearing roles within the family depends on the role demands, stresses and supports emanating from other settings. Parent's evaluations of their own capacity to function, as well as their view of the child are related to such external factors as flexibility of job

schedules, adequacy of child care arrangements, the presence of friends or neighbours who can help out in large or small emergencies, the quality of health and social services and neighbourhood safety.

The following diagram represents such a framework.

Figure 1: Meso-, exo- and macro-system

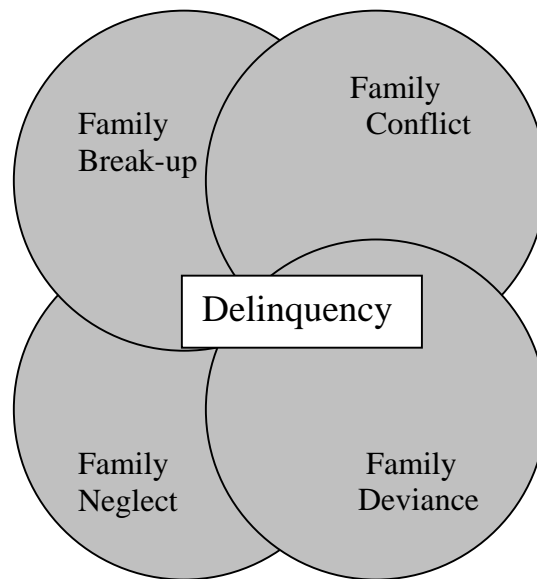


The family environment into which a child is born may exert the most powerful and long-lasting influence over the child's development and future life chances. The nature of family circumstances in which the children are being brought up, may consequently influence them either

positively or negatively, depending on what they went through during their developmental process (Howarth 1998:56). In an alcoholic family, parents may expose their children to their drinking patterns and as a result, these children may copy this behaviour in their adult world and become alcoholics themselves. On the other hand, these children may receive professional assistance, as a way to learn from their parent's mistakes and become more stable people.

Siegel (2002:159) states that a number of studies indicate that children who have experienced family breakup are more likely to demonstrate behaviour problems and hyperactivity than children in intact families. Family breakup is often associated with conflict, hostility and aggression. Children of divorce are suspected of having inadequate supervision, weakened attachment and greater susceptibility to peer pressure. The following diagram intergrate the four factors linked to antisocial behaviour and delinquency, which Siegel (2002:159) describes.

Figure 2 : Four factors linked to antisocial behaviour and delinquency



Delinquency and family relationships offer ample evidence that family life can be a potent force on a child's development. The delinquent child is likely to grow up in a large family with parents who may be dependent on alcohol, participate in criminal activities, be harsh and inconsistent disciplinarians, be cold and unaffectionate, have marital conflicts and be poor role models. However, the quality of a child's family life seems to be more important than its structure. Once there is a strong link of interaction between the above-mentioned factors then delinquent activities may escalate (Siegel 2002:165).

Siegel (2002:32) indicates that there are more factors which can be associated with the prevalence of juvenile delinquency and that it would be a fruitless effort to concentrate on delinquency control efforts without looking into these factors. He describes it as follows:

- **Gender and delinquency**

The relationship between gender and delinquency is apparent and according to Siegel (2002:32) it is indicated that official arrest statistics, victim data and self-reports indicate that males are significantly more criminal than females. Furthermore, he indicates that girls are more likely to be arrested as runaways than boys.

- **Racial patterns in delinquency**

Siegel (2002:33) indicates that African American youths are arrested for a disproportionate number of murders, rapes, robberies and assaults, while white youths are arrested for a disproportionate share of arsons and alcohol-related violations. Furthermore, the author indicates that the racial gap in the juvenile arrest rate has widened during the past decade. African American youths have experienced a steady increase in their arrest rates, whereas rates for other groups have remained stable.

According to the researcher, it appears that the above findings indicate that there is a high rate of criminal involvement among African American juveniles than among whites. This could be due to various factors which could include poverty, the family structure, the different modes of socialization during the up-bringing of these youths and racism. Furthermore, research has also revealed that the disproportionate number of African American official delinquency is a result of bias. An example is cited where there has been an indication that juvenile suspects who belong to ethnic minorities who are male and poor, are more likely to be formally arrested than suspects who are white, female and affluent. As a

result, such bias would make reported statistics to be no correct (Siegel 2002:35).

If one takes the political situation in South Africa into account, then it could also be the situation that racism in the past could also contribute to juvenile delinquency. In some cases it can still be a factor.

- **Social class and delinquency**

Siegel (2002:36) believes that antisocial behaviour occurs at all levels of the social strata. On the other hand, he indicates that some experts argue that some middle- and upper class youths engage in some forms of minor illegal activities and theft offenses. It is members of the underclass who are responsible for the majority of serious delinquent acts. The author also stresses that there is a prevailing wisdom that children who engage in the most serious forms of delinquency (for example, gang violence), are more likely to be members of the lower class.

- **Age and delinquency**

Siegel (2002:37) states that youths who get involved with delinquency at a very early age are most likely to become career criminals. Age is regarded as the key determinant of delinquency. The latter aspect is argued by the author by indicating that crime decline with age and to prove that, he mentions the following reasons for the ageing-out process:

-

rowing older means having to face the future. Young people,

especially the indigent and antisocial, tend to “discount the future.” They think to themselves that why should they delay gratification when faced with an uncertain future.

- With maturity comes the ability to resist the “quick fix” to their problems. Research has revealed that some children may turn to crime as a way to solve their problems of adolescence, loneliness, frustration and fear of peer rejection. As they mature, conventional means of problem solving become available. Life experience helps former delinquents seek out nondestructive solutions to their personal problems.
- Maturation coincides with increased levels of responsibility. Petty crimes are a risky and exciting social activity that provides adventure in an otherwise boring world. As youths grow older, they take on new responsibilities that are inconsistent with criminality. For example, young people who marry, enlist in the armed services or enroll in vocational training courses are less likely to pursue criminal activities.
- Personalities can change with age. As youths mature, rebellious youngsters may develop increased self-control and be able to resist antisocial behaviour.
- Young adults become more aware of the risks that accompany crime. As adults, they are no longer protected by the kindly arms of the juvenile justice system.

Research revealed that not all the juvenile criminals desist as they age, some go on to become chronic adult offenders. Yet, even they slow down as they age. Crime is too dangerous, physically taxing and unrewarding and that punishments are too harsh and long-lasting to become a way of life for most people.

3.5 Juvenile delinquency and alcoholism in the family system

The family represents the primary agent for the socialization of children and is the first social-group which a child experiences as well as the group with which most children have their most enduring relationships. According to Bartollas (1993:262) the family provides a context in which the child can identify with social roles, moral standards and society's laws. It is also a system in which children can be disciplined if they fail to comply with such norms and values. Holman (1995:23) states the following about it:

The family is the major means of the socialization of children, that is, where they can be taught ideas of right and wrong, where they can learn the limits of tolerated behaviour, where they can acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes to live as adults. Not least, it is within the family that children can gain an identity for themselves, can perceive themselves as good or bad, liked or not liked.

The researcher would like to indicate that on the contrary of providing for these children, the family could also neglect the children's emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual and social needs. The neglect of such basic needs can have a profound effect upon the shaping up of a child's values, attitude and identity.

In the context of South Africa, the family system has been going through some dramatic changes. Most parents are forced to leave their children at an early stage of their development process because of the lack of job opportunities in their immediate scenarios. This often results in an unhealthy parent-child relationship. The researcher would like to emphasize that there are also other serious social problems, which can affect the quality of family life, especially where children are concerned. Such social problems may include the following:

- **Divorce**

Most families are affected by the increasing divorce rate worldwide. Once the rate of divorce increases, it means that the phenomenon of single-parent families increases. According to statistics, one in four children in the world, lives with only one parent, typically the child's mother (Bartollas 1993:262). The researcher argues that, once the divorced parents remarry, it would mean that children in these families would have to adjust to new parental figures.

- **Family violence**

Marital violence is often prominent in some family systems. Different forms of domestic violence are often experienced in such families, such as physical assault, emotional abuse and neglect. Padayacchee (1994:50) indicates that the dysfunctional pattern of violent family systems impairs the ability of parents to meet the developmental and emotional needs of their children. Children growing up from such family systems are greatly affected by witnessing domestic violence and may end up imitating the same violent behaviours they are exposed to. They may also end up getting involved in violent activities themselves and creating vulnerable living circumstances.

- **Substance abuse**

Children from families where parent(s) or significant others abuse substances such as alcohol or other illicit drugs, are often exposed to some form of abuse. They also may experience neglect and economic hardships and their children may also be exposed to violent situations, which can hurt their feelings and destroy their self-esteem.

- **Blended- families**

When divorced parents remarry, the initial definition of a family takes a different form due to the new pattern consisting of the natural parent, the step- parent and children. More tension can be created in the family system when both the parents have custody of their own children and all the children live in the same home. Bartollas (1993:263) mention that the scenario can at times even become more drastic and chaotic when the parents have children born out of their marriage. My children, your

children and our children can create such problems in a family system, that it can contribute to emotional stress and later unhealthy family patterns.

- **Homelessness**

Regardless of age, homelessness exposes children to settings with high prevalence of abuse and crime. Although they might still have some family ties, they may have escaped the intolerable family life due to various kinds of abuse such as rejection by a new step-parent, violence, crime, drugs or prostitution as a consolation and as a way to survive (Hundeide 1991:31).

- **Unemployment**

Unemployment often leads to poverty and has detrimental effects on the family system. Once parents find it hard to fend for their families, children may be faced with the challenge of going out in the streets and making plans to support their poverty-stricken families. These children may be exploited and forced to work under intolerable conditions in order to make a living.

Children growing up in families experiencing any of the above-mentioned social problems may develop a lot of resentment, rejection and confusion towards their circumstances, or they may even carry the same socialization style into their own families. The children of families with step-parent relationship and the abuse of substances such as alcohol or illegal drugs, may be subjected to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

As a result of this, children especially boys, may resort to criminal activities as a way to supplement their broken family lives. Bartollas (1993:266) identifies the following factors as contributing towards juvenile delinquency:

- **Broken homes**

Different factors constitute towards the broken home phenomenon. These factors include divorce, death of a parent and the abuse of substances by either or both parents. When the family's stability is threatened, such as through threats of separation by the parents or some other marital crisis or family related problems that effect the children, these children can behave in such a way, that the focus is upon themselves and not on the family, which can disintegrate.

- **Family size and the child's birth order in the family**

The family size also contributes to the fact that parents will be in the position to give their children the necessary attention they may need from them. Older siblings may be expected to care for the younger ones, but this may be a problem since they may not be equipped to execute such tasks. Bartollas (1993:267) indicates that delinquent behaviour is more likely to be exhibited by middle children rather than the first or the last child. According to this view, the first child, receives the undivided attention and affection of both parents. The last child benefits from parents' experiences in raising children before as well as from the presence of other older siblings, who serve as role models.

- **Delinquent siblings or criminal parents (genetic patterns or role-models)**

Since families are the primary source of socialization, children learn and identify with the norms and values practiced within their family systems. Bartollas (1993:268) supports the latter statement by indicating that siblings learn delinquency from others in their families. He further states that research revealed that the sons of fathers who had serious criminal records, were likely to be raised in poor families and experienced bad child rearing, which increased their risk of an early first conviction. Brezina (1998:71) agrees that research that examines the psycho-social effects of child abuse and neglect, have observed a connection between child abuse or maltreatment and subsequent delinquency including violence, theft, property destruction and drug use (Messman-Moore & Long, 2000:496). Rocha-Silva (1996:27) makes use of the following case study to emphasize how family alcoholism may lead children to the streets and ultimately into criminal activities.

Case- study

Tsepo, a 14 year-old male youth, was admitted to the Streetwise Soweto shelter in Dube on 16/10/1992, after having run- away from home to the streets of Hillbrow on 4/6/1992. In August 1992 he started visiting the Streetwise Johannesburg shelter in Hillbrow and was transferred to the Soweto shelter in October 1992.

Background information

Tsepo, the fourth child of a family of six children, five boys and one girl, was the youngest. Both biological parents were alive and living with the children. Tsepo and his five siblings lived under extremely poor conditions. Both parents were unemployed and his eldest brother was in prison at the time, having been arrested for theft, probably committed to assist the family. There was indiscriminate abuse of alcohol in the family. Both parents and two elder brothers abused alcohol. The house was filthy with sparse old furniture and the entire family of eight lived in a two-roomed house. Tsepo had a fairly good relationship with his mother and siblings, but resented his father for not supporting them and for spending most of his time drinking. As four of the boys were school drop- outs, only the youngest girl was still at school, battling with minimum school facilities. Tsepo dropped out of school in 1992, when he was 12 years old and in grade 2.

Family problem and drinking history

Tsepo stated that he dropped out of school and took to the streets of the

suburb because his home conditions were so bad. Most of the time his family were without food or warm clothes. Nights in winter were a nightmare: there were not enough blankets and no coal to keep a fire going. The father coming back in the middle of the night, drunk and abusive, was the last straw for him. At school Tsepo was the laughing stock, had no uniform or clean clothes, and sometimes he had to steal other children's books to have something to write on. Nobody seemed to care, neither his parents nor the teachers. Some of the teachers ridiculed him for not having clean clothes, books and a uniform. None of them, he stated, paid a house visit to see the conditions under which he lived. Ultimately when everything seemed hopeless in June 1992, he took to the streets. There he started to sniff glue because, according to him, it made him feel okay. He stated that he forgot his family with all their suffering, forgot his hunger and cold; he also stated that he hated the taste and smell of the glue. He had to beg or wash taxis for money to buy the glue, which he had to have, especially on days when there was no food in dustbins and the people were not generous.

Tsepo stated further that what hurt him most out there in the streets were the hurtful abusive attitudes of the community, who despised street children for being in the streets, instead of trying to understand their suffering.

This case study is an indication of how family circumstances may lead young people to the streets. The researcher agrees with the fact that Tsepo took off to the streets in order to run away from the life of abuse

and neglect. Furthermore, his parents and his sibling's abuse of alcohol could be one of the contributing factors to the harsh conditions he lived in. Family violence resulting from Tsepo's alcoholic father may have also played a serious role into supporting him to live on the streets. Unemployment of both his parents and poverty on the other hand, contributed to Tsepo's predicament.

If children like Tsepo are not fortunate enough to receive early interventions, they may as well find themselves in compromising circumstances of having to choose between a promising future and life behind bars. These children often suffer neglect and deprivation of human contact and stimulation- very often combined with malnutrition.

The researcher would like to agree that most of these children are being ignored by society and often get involved in criminal activities, which ultimately put them in trouble with the law. The case study indicates further that although some children might still have some family ties, the family system had become so intolerable for them due to various kinds of abuse like rejection by their biological or stepparents, that they had to run away. These children see the street as their homes and they seek shelter and a sense of belonging among other street children. In other instances these children are left entirely alone and many of them become psychologically disturbed in the end.

As a result of losing hope they take part in violent activities, crime, abuse drugs or get involved in prostitution as a consolation and as a way of survival (Hundeide 1991:30). The researcher would like to state that

these children might also end up adopting the alcohol patterns of their parents as a survival mechanism and as a way of coping. They may even adopt the same behaviour in their own adult world.

On the other hand, it is not necessarily implied that due to the parent's alcohol abuse, children will necessarily abuse alcohol themselves. Through the necessary therapeutic interventions, these children can be assisted in overcoming their emotional trauma and exposure. In that manner, the dysfunctional behavioural patterns will be changed in such a way that they would not reappear within the family system again.

In a National survey conducted in 1996 by Rocha-Silva & Stahmer, prisoners in the South African prisons aged between 10-21 years old indicated the following reasons for drinking alcohol:

- **Experimenting with alcohol**

Young people don't start drinking alcohol with the aim of getting addicted to it. The initial plan is often to imitate from either their parents/significant others or their peers and find out how they will respond from the effect alcohol will have on them. The main reason for experimenting with alcohol is solely out of curiosity. If one or both parents use or abuse alcohol regularly in the family system, the children in such families will be even more motivated to experiment with alcohol.

- **Peer- group pressure**

The researcher is of the view that children are prone to peer group pressure especially when friends are more influential than parents. Holman (1995:204) indicates that the influence of friends can be positive or negative in circumstances where young people are faced with delinquent activities such as experimenting with alcohol, or, on the contrary, draw them into delinquency. The same author indicates further that children will more easily become friends with peers who are abusing alcohol when the latter are not unfamiliar to them. In other words as other family members or caretakers also use or abuse alcohol.

- **A way of having fun**

Often young people associate fun and entertainment with the presence of alcohol. A party where alcohol is not served may not be regarded as fun or enjoyable. Very often they identified with this pattern in their own family system. In some instances, these young people may only experiment with alcohol in such an environment and not necessarily drink it afterwards (Rocha- Silva 1998:62).

- **Unemployment leading towards poverty from their homes**

Holman (1995:60) indicates that the unemployed tend to be poor and that the combination of poverty and unemployment is associated with stress and may lead people into abusing alcohol, which may result into involvement in criminal activities in order to feed the habit.

- **Their parent(s) had a drinking problem or are dependent on other forms of drugs**

Parents are regarded as role models for their children. The manner in which they behave, is much more crucial for the development of these children (Rocha-Silva 1998:53). According to the researcher, it is however evident that when parents abuse alcohol, it is most likely that children will identify with this behaviour pattern and act it out in one way or another. They will accept that the use and later abuse of alcohol is accepted the way the parents introduced in the family system.

From out this discussion, it is evident that children that are exposed to an alcohol abuse pattern in the family system, stand a good chance to adapt to the same pattern as young people, but can also carry it over to their adulthood and repeat the cycle. Through this literature study it is further confirmed that vulnerable family systems in which alcohol abuse is one of the social problems the family experience, can contribute to the emotional problems children experience in that family and in many cases as a result of it, contributes to juvenile delinquency.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, juvenile delinquency is explored and the concept is clearly defined. The different factors that contribute towards delinquency among young people, is discussed in order to indicate the connection between family life of young people from an alcoholic background and

delinquent behaviour which may lead to the imprisonment of these young people.

The empirical study of the research process will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Empirical investigation

4.1 Introduction

After a thorough literature study, the researcher has conducted the empirical investigation in order to explore the effects of alcoholism in the family on young offenders. According to Stafford (1994:6), children who come from alcoholic family backgrounds have more chance of displaying deviant behaviour than those from non-alcoholic family backgrounds. Frequently it is quite difficult to sort out the primary problem between family alcoholism, juvenile delinquency and other related social problems that affect families, such as divorce, unemployment and domestic violence (Lewis 1991:109).

Through this explorative study, the researcher investigated whether or not alcohol or other forms of substance abuse by parents or significant others, do contribute towards juvenile delinquency and imprisonment.

During the empirical investigation, the researcher made use of a semi-structured interview schedule in order to gather information from the respondents' perspective, regarding the effect alcohol abuse in their

families, had on their lives. The interview schedule has been divided into six (6) themes with sub-themes.

The method of gathering data to achieve the objectives of the study as well as the research design and procedures used in the empirical study, are discussed in this chapter. Focus is also placed on the integration of the literature and data gathered from the twenty (20) respondents.

The following themes form part of the interview schedule:

- Composition of the family structure.
- The perception of the respondents regarding the quality of the family system.
- The respondent's experience of alcohol abuse in the family.
- The respondent's perception of himself.
- The social and emotional functioning of the respondent.
- The respondent's perception of his own drinking pattern.

4.2 The research design and procedures of the empirical study

- **Research design**

The researcher utilized an explorative research design during the research process. This type of the research design has been utilized to explore the way in which alcoholism in the respondent's families, contributed to their behavioral problems and led to juvenile delinquency and imprisonment.

- **Population**

The research population consists of the young offenders detained in Rustenburg prison in North-West province, aged between sixteen (16) to twenty-one (21) years. The researcher has interviewed twenty (20) respondents who were selected with the specific purpose of exploring their family-related problems through the social work department.

- **Sampling method**

Purposive sampling as an example of non-probability sampling has been utilized during the research process. This implicates that there is a specific purpose for selecting such a sample from the total population.

A sample of male juveniles ranging from the ages of 16 to 21 has been selected and only respondents that could speak and understand English and who have been identified during the assessment phase that they experienced family problems, were considered.

- **Data analysis**

The data is analyzed in a descriptive form. All eight (8) themes of the interviewing schedule are discussed according to the manner in which the respondents respond on it. Each theme is discussed in relation to the sub-themes as outlined in the schedule. The literature study regarding alcoholism and juvenile delinquency, were used as a knowledge base to interpret the data as collected.

- **Research procedure**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the respondents.. It is a method having a list of issues, which have to be investigated, and such issues are made prior to the interview (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:110).

During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher presented specific themes and subthemes to the respondents to gather their perceptions regarding the effect alcohol abuse had on their lives and whether the latter, contributed to juvenile delinquency. All ethical aspects as discussed in chapter 1, were utilized during the interviews.

4.3 Discussion of the empirical data

Twenty (20) respondents were interviewed, ranging between the ages of sixteen (16) to twenty-one (21) years. Discussion of the themes of the interviewing schedule is as follows:

Theme 1: Composition of the family structure

Sub-theme 1.1: The marital status of the biological parents of the respondents:

- During the interviewing process, it was confirmed that most respondents came from single parent families who never experienced the love and support they felt any child need during their childhood. The majority of these single parents are mothers and as a result, most respondents wouldn't be able to tell the

whereabouts of their biological fathers. They refer to a father figure as unfamiliar to them and they do not know what to expect from a father in a family system. Bartollas (1993:262) confirms the latter by indicating that according to statistics, one in four children in the world live with only one parent and in most cases, the child's mother.

- Although a small percentage of the respondent's parents still live together, they refer to them as unhappy people who often fight with each other. Through that, they created an unhappy atmosphere in which they do not want to be part of and as a result of it, rather leave the family system.
- The majority of the population of the respondents experienced that they did not receive the love of both their biological parents. They also do not receive the nurturing and stimulation any child needs during their developmental phases.

Sub-theme 1.2: Family living arrangements:

- Nearly half of the respondents come from nuclear families, which imply that they lived with their immediate family members such as a mother, father and siblings. Another group of the respondents lived with the extended families of which grandparent(s), uncles and aunts are part of the family system.
- A very small part of the total population comes from both the nuclear family and the extended family, which implies that the respondent(s) lived in these families interchangeably. Only one

respondent lived in a place of safety from a very early stage of his development until imprisonment.

Sub-theme 1.3: Respondents' birth order:

- The greatest percentage of the respondents is middle children who explained that they often felt that they never had a special place in the family system. Eldest children were regarded as important according to certain cultural customs and the youngest one was often spoiled by the parents involved or significant others who took care of them. Some of the respondents who were firstborn children, confirmed that although they sometimes fulfilled a special place in the family system and were also recognised for that, they often were burden with adult tasks which stolen their childhood from them. They usually had to nurture the younger children in the family system and never experienced any of that, themselves.
- According to theory, it has been discovered that children's birth order has a major influence on the quality of family life including the parent-child relationship. Older siblings may be expected to assist the parents in taking care of the younger ones, although they may not be equipped to execute such tasks. Bartollas (1993:267) indicates that delinquent behaviour is more likely to be exhibited by middle children than the first or the last child. According to this view, the first-born child receives the undivided attention and affection of both parents. The last child benefits from the parents' experiences in raising children as well as from the presence of other siblings, who serve as role models. Through this research it became evident that the firstborn

child can also become a victim of not receiving the love and nurturing they need as children, but it is also the researcher's view that middle children may have a lot of pressure and lack of parental stimulation. Both circumstances may lead to behavioural problems.

Sub-theme 1.4: The economic status of the families

- More than half of the respondents come from poverty-stricken families and only a small percentage, namely two (2) respondents, came from families that coped financially. Juveniles, who were part of poor families, were often labelled by the community as bad people, who always had to beg for food. Sometimes they could not attend school, because of a lack of funds and were referred to as dump children. Others left their homes as a way to survive. When they live on the street, people tend to feel sorry for them and provide them with food. According to some of the respondents there was never money to buy food as their parents or caretakers abused alcohol or other forms of substances.
- The research confirmed that poverty in a family system due to unemployment or low family income, can have detrimental effects on a family system. Once parents find it hard to fend for their families, children may be faced with the challenge of going out on the streets to find ways of supporting their poverty stricken families. These children may be exploited and even be forced to work under intolerable conditions in order to make a living. Some others will even commit a crime to survive as a human being. (Bartollas 1993:266).

Sub-theme 1.5: Childhood experiences of the respondents:

- More than half of the respondents revealed that they had painful and abusive childhood experiences. This involved a number of factors such as abandonment or neglect by either of the parents, having to fend for themselves, divorce or separation between parents and exposure to the consequences of alcohol abuse by either parents or significant others. Such consequences may in turn affect the stability of the family system and the functioning of children who are brought up in such families. The respondents confirm that when the family experiences trauma, like a separation by the parents or some other marital crisis or family-related problems, it affected their childhood to such an extent that they rather left their homes than to endure the ongoing trauma and their parents' alcohol abuse.

Sub-theme 1.6: The academic achievements of the respondents:

- Before their imprisonment, half of the respondents had already dropped out of school because of a variety of factors such as poverty, lack of parental support and peer group pressure. Some of the respondents were still at school during the time of their arrest and managed to go back to school while serving their prison sentences. Although they attended school, they were constantly involved in fights or other related problems. Only one (1) child completed grade twelve (12).

Theme 2: The perception of the respondents regarding the quality of the family system

Sub-theme 2.1: The family interaction patterns (relationships) of the respondents:

- Most of the respondents experience closeness with the mother figure in the family system. The reason for this was because of the fact that these children grew up in the absence of a father figure. Some of them do not know what to expect from a father figure and mentioned that they can only create assumptions about the value of a father-son relationship. The respondents said specifically that their closeness with their mothers not necessary refer to a relationship that can speak of quality. Some of these mothers also abused alcohol and therefore were not able to provide emotional security.
- Some of the respondents indicated that they were exposed to intense conflict in the cases where the parents are still living together as a result of different social problems of which alcohol abuse were very evident. This was even the case when the respondent lived with the extended families or other caretakers. At times it became so painful, that the decided to leave their homes and found them later on the street.

Sub-theme 2.2: Stability of the family system:

- Some of the respondents referred to their family system as stable if they could remove the parent or significant other who abused alcohol or who experienced other social problems, out of the home. Because of the presence of these people, they suffered of a lack of nurturing and support as children.
- Another group of the respondents highlighted the fact that they come from seriously dysfunctional family backgrounds. They had indicated that they were exposed to alcohol abuse, which left them in a position to fend for them. The respondents admitted that they left the homes with the hope of creating new opportunities of survival. In place of that they became part of a peer group culture to steal and hurt people to make ends meet. Sometimes they enjoyed to hurt other people as a way to communicate their own emotional pain and abuse alcohol themselves to continue with this behaviour pattern. Some of the respondents were arrested for these acts and found guilty. Owing to their alcohol abuse problem, parent(s) or significant other(s) wouldn't be in a position to care for their children and as such, expose them to vulnerable circumstances such as peer group pressure, involvement in criminal activities and juvenile delinquency in general (De Beer 2000:75).
- The research confirms that alcohol abuse by parents or significant others may lead to the dysfunction of the family system and as a result, juvenile delinquency and imprisonment. This empirical study confirms one of the objectives of the study namely that juveniles

could identify with the patterns of alcoholism from within their family systems and that such patterns of behaviour, may contribute towards juvenile delinquency and imprisonment (De Beer 2000:75).

- The above confirms that alcoholism within the family system, has an effect on the rearing of children, either directly through abuse or indirectly through parental role modelling. Other factors, which have been discovered by the researcher to have a negative influence on the stability of the family system besides alcoholism, include unemployment, poverty, birth order and many more.

Theme 3: The respondents' experience of alcohol abuse in the family

Sub-theme 3.1: Alcohol abuse of family members:

- All the respondents confirmed that they were part of family systems in which alcohol abuse took place. The alcohol abuse affected them so badly, that they constantly experienced feelings of rejection, worthlessness and a loss of emotional and physical security. Some of the respondents mentioned that there was always money for alcohol but not food or other basic needs. At times the respondents also started to experiment with alcohol and even abused alcohol together with the parents or other caretakers.
- Rocha-Silva (1998:53) confirms the latter statement by emphasising that parents are regarded as role models for their children. However, it

is evident that when parents abuse alcohol, it is most likely that children will imitate that behaviour pattern and act it out in one way or another.

Some of the respondents abused alcohol due to peer groups pressure and their identification with unsuitable friends.

Sub-theme 3.2: Effects of alcohol abuse in the family on young people:

- Alcohol abuse by parents or significant others within family systems, has a negative effect on young people, which influences their involvement with criminal activities. The respondents confirmed this statement by indicating that because of the alcohol abuse in their families, they did not receive the opportunity to experience trust towards themselves and others or how to deal with painful feelings. This contributed to the developing of their bad self-esteem and lack of trust towards others. Parents would rarely bother to find out more about their children's emotional, social, psychological and spiritual well-being (De Beer 2000:75). In a way, juvenile delinquency may be one of the ways to deal with these feelings (Karoly et al.1998:3).

Sub-theme 3.3: Exposure towards alcohol treatment by the alcoholic family members:

- Most of the respondents indicated that either them or their family members were never exposed to any form of therapeutic intervention for alcohol abuse. It has been highlighted that these respondents are

also not informed about methods of treatment they can receive and where to seek support.

- In cases where the respondents have been exposed to treatment, they did not experience it as successfully while one (1) respondent received treatment from a traditional healer or a sangoma, which was also not a successful attempt to heal from the alcohol abuse. In both treatment forms, no positive results were achieved in helping the alcoholic.
- Alcohol abuse might serve a function of bringing the family members together in order to support the addicted member. On the contrary, such a function will limit the family members to seek professional interventions in order to deal with the problems they are facing (Lewis et al., 1994:146).

Bartollas (1993:268) indicates that siblings learn delinquency from others in their families. This study has revealed that the majority of the respondents identified with significant others in the family system who abused alcohol.

- There is often inadequate supervision and discipline in alcoholic families. When parents are under the influence of alcohol most of the time, children tend to take advantage of the situation thinking that they may do whatever they wish because parents don't see them. If only one parent is constantly under the influence and the entire responsibility of disciplining and supervising children is vested to one parent, this could be a frustrating and exhausting exercise. The result can be that these children can flee from their homes and end up making wrong choices of friends and becoming involved in criminal activities (De Beer, 2000:75).

- Children from families where parent(s) or significant others abuse substances such as alcohol or other illicit drugs, are often exposed to some form of abuse. They may experience neglect and economic hardships. These parents may also expose their children to violent situations, which can hurt their feelings and destroy their self-esteem.

Theme 4: The respondent's perception of himself:

Sub-theme 4.1: Respondents perception of their self-esteem:

- De Beer (2000:75) indicates that children living with alcoholics often identify with unhealthy living patterns, which may lead to juvenile delinquency. They do not have the opportunity to experience trust towards themselves and others or learn how to deal with painful feelings. Juvenile delinquency then becomes a way to deal with these feelings. Most of these respondents confirmed that they experienced a low self-esteem and also showed behaviour patterns like school drop-outs, failure in life, depression, increased anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, criminal involvement and imprisonment.

Theme 5: The social and emotional functioning of the respondent

Sub-theme 5.1: Respondents perception of the prison environment

- Most of the respondents viewed the prison environment as safe and secure since it kept them away from becoming involved in criminal activities and associating with the wrong people. Furthermore the respondents indicated that the prison helps them through the provision of skills training and it improved their emotional well-being.
- Some of the respondents viewed the prison as very dangerous and hostile, which exposed them to bad behaviour patterns they never experimented with before. They also referred to factors that contribute towards the lack of effective rehabilitation in prisons namely the lack of resources in the prison, shortage of trained and qualified personnel, over-population of prisons and gang activities. These respondents admitted that the prison become at times unbearable and they experience from time to time intense feelings of aggression towards the people in their lives like parents and other caretakers, who did not support them as children.

Sub-theme 5.2: The respondents' support system in case of a crisis:

- Most of the respondents only experienced their nuclear families as supportive after their imprisonment. A small group indicated that they

did not have a family support system either due to the distance between their homes and prison or through negligence from their families. The family system was also not a support system before they were arrested. They indicated further that they are receiving support from some prison officials, social workers or priests. They learned to live with the fact that they do not have the love and support of their families.

- Three of the respondents indicated that they still do not have the support of their biological parents because they grew up under the custody of their extended families, including grandparents, uncles or aunts.
- Two of the respondents acknowledged that they do not have the support of their families or other caretakers and depend solely on their friends, both inside and outside the prison.

Sub-theme 5.3: Activities in the prison with which the respondents are currently involved:

- All the respondents enrolled for either a formal or informal training programme. The formal programme includes the primary level of education up to the tertiary level of education. The informal training includes empowerment in life-skills programmes and trade-skills such as upholstery, garment-making, catering agricultural skills and many others.

Theme 6: The respondents' perception of their own drinking pattern

Sub-theme 6.1: The respondents' perception about alcohol consumption:

- Some of the respondents identified with alcohol abuse as a way of living and admitted that alcohol intake do not need to be problematic at all times. Although they admitted that the use of it can be destructive because they experienced it in their own homes, one can also associates it with fun and entertainment. The other respondents view alcohol as very destructive and that it can only have a negative effect on the functioning of a family system.

Sub-theme 6.2: Factors that contributed towards the drinking patterns of the respondents:

- Some of the respondents indicated that although they were exposed to alcohol abuse in the family system of which they were part of, start to abuse alcohol through the influence of their friends. The researcher is of the opinion that children are prone to peer group pressure especially when friends are more influential than parents. Holman (1995:204) indicates that the influence of friends can be positive or negative in circumstances where young people are faced with delinquent activities such as experimenting with alcohol, or on the contrary, draw them into delinquency.

- The other respondents indicated that they had been influenced by their parents or significant others to experimenting with alcohol. This confirms that parents serve as role models for the young people and that they identify with either positive or negative behaviours of these parents during their developmental process. Some respondents experimenting on their own with alcohol and got addicted to it.

Sub-theme 6.3: The link between alcohol abuse and criminal involvement:

- Most of the respondents found it difficult to respond on this sub-theme partly because they still did not have the opportunity to deal with their guilt feelings regarding their criminal involvement. With some support of the researcher, these respondents indicated that alcohol abuse contributed to their criminal activities. They even indicated that it was easier to commit the crime when one is under the influence of alcohol. It is clear that most of the respondents identified with the behaviour of their parents or other significant others. Rocha-Silva (1998:51) also confirms that juvenile offenders, who grew up in a home where alcohol were abused, often commit crimes under the influence themselves. The reason for that is that the alcohol let them feel stronger and more empowered-a feeling they experienced their parents demonstrated when they were under the influence of alcohol. Some respondents often had to support their parents or other caretakers in their own criminal activities when they were under the influence of alcohol. When they refused to accompany them during a burglary or other destructive deeds, they were physically abused.

Sub-theme 6.4: Alcohol abuse as a coping mechanism for the respondents:

- Through out the interviews it became clear that most of the times that alcohol abuse were used by the respondents as a coping mechanism, it took place on a subconscious level. Some of the respondents could identify through the interviews that it helped them not to feel the pain of the rejection of their beloved ones when they were still in the house or even after their arrests, while other admitted that it was easier to commit a crime when they were under the influence of alcohol.

Sub-theme 6.5: The respondents' perception about total withdrawal from alcohol abuse:

- Most of the respondents indicated that they are currently sober and are not taking any form of drugs in the prison. The regulations of the institution where they are detained, do not allow the use of any form of drugs including cigarettes. They indicated that it is not difficult for a person to withdraw completely from abusing substances, especially alcohol. They emphasised the fact that one should really be determined to withdraw.

4.4 Conclusion

Alcoholism in the family system is a problem that is more serious than it is realized. It affects every family member in the family system and prevent especially a child to grow up in an atmosphere that can only contributes to the best interest of that child. Through the empirical study, the researcher was able to explore the problem statement as explained clearly in chapter 1 namely that alcoholism in a family system may have an effect on the lives of young people. This may also contribute to the fact that these children get involved in criminal activities and as a result, possible imprisonment. Conclusions and recommendations on the findings as explained in this chapter, will be formulated in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study focused on the effects of alcoholism in the family, on young offenders. Alcohol abuse by parents or significant others within the family system, have been identified as having negative effects on the lives of young people in the family system which can result in clashes with the law and finally imprisonment (Bartollas, 1993:268). Many factors in the family system which can lead to the fact that children in that systems may identify with an alcoholic pattern, is been identified and discussed in this report. It also highlighted that not all children that grew up in a family where alcohol abuse took place, will become juvenile delinquents, but will definitely have one or another effect on that child's life. The family system stays the most important context in which a child can identify with healthy socialization skills. If this system does not function in a healthy way, one can expect that this can create emotional obstacles for this child in his adult life, which will allow the circle of trauma to continue. Alcoholism is one of the most severe social problems in the society of which the effect of it, is currently underestimated. When parents abuse alcohol, it is clear that it will influence their parenting skills, especially those, which is needed to nurture their

children to experience emotional security. The lack of the latter, can result in juvenile delinquency as a painful way to create specialness and selfworth.

The researcher has conducted interviews with the respondents in order to collect data regarding the aim of this study and integrated it with information as explored through the literature study. According to the findings from the empirical data, the researcher came to certain conclusions and formulated recommendations. Focus is also placed on the assessment of the aims and objectives of the study.

5.2 Assessment of the aims and objectives of the study

5.2.1 The aims of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the effects of alcoholism in the family system, on young offenders. The aim of the study has been achieved through the explorative research process. The study confirms that there is a relationship between alcohol abuse by the parents or significant others and young offenders in their family systems. In general, this has been identified as one of the main contributing factors regarding their involvement in delinquent activities, which results in their imprisonment.

5.2.2 The objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

To explore through a literature study the function of the behaviour patterns of juveniles, who come from alcoholic families. In achieving this objective, the researcher undertook a literature study in chapter 2 to elaborate on alcoholism as social phenomenon in the family system, the factors that may contribute to alcoholism as well as the way it can affect the members of that system. In Chapter 3, the phenomenon namely, juvenile delinquency was explored with the focus on juvenile delinquency as social problem as well as the factors that may contribute to it.

To explore through the empirical study, the way in which juveniles could identify with the patterns of alcoholism within their family systems and how such patterns of behaviour, may contribute towards juvenile delinquency and imprisonment.

5.3 Conclusions

The research can construct the following conclusions:

- The findings of the research confirmed the problem statement, namely that alcoholism in the family system, contributes towards juvenile delinquency and possible imprisonment. Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2000:27) indicate that when the stability of the family system is threatened by alcohol abuse, the children in that family

will behave in such ways that they will seek alternative ways of maintaining their stability.

- Parents who abuse alcohol, may not realize that their children need their emotional support. If children do not receive it from their parents, that may force them to seek for it from their peers on the street. Most unfortunately, they might be prone to peer group pressure as a way to feel accepted and gain some emotional security. This way may ultimately, lead them into criminal activities.
- The marital status of the respondent's parents had an effect on their involvement in criminal acts. The findings of the study indicated that most of the respondents come from single parent families. This is due to the fact that some parents are divorced and others are deceased. Some of the respondents do not know their real fathers at all. The majority of the population of the respondents do not receive the love of both their biological parents as well as the nurturing and stimulation any child might need during their developmental stages (De Wit in De Beer, 2000:75). Some of the respondents can only fantasize about a father-son relationship and the value that could have in their lives. These boys experience currently intense rejection by their parents and specifically the father figure.
- The majority of the respondents grew up in their families of origin. The others grew up in extended families in which they were exposed to family members who abused alcohol. Most of these families did not provide in the emotional needs of the respondents

as they did not experienced emotional security while they were still living there. Some of the respondents refer to their emotional states at that time as depressed, painful and sad. They further refer to their living conditions as abusive through which they learned to be aggressive as a way to protect themselves against others.

- The middle child experiences often more pressure and also a lack of parental stimulation. This is also supported by Bartollas (1993:267) in his study. This author also indicates that the first child, receives in general the undivided attention and affection of both parents and the last child benefits from the parents' experiences in raising children before as well as from the presence of other siblings, who serve as role models. The study highlighted further that the eldest child often has to fulfil the roles of absent parents especially in the case of alcohol abuse, which can withhold the right of such child to experience his own childhood. This can lead to emotional insecurity and runaway behaviour as a way to bring some relief for a situation such child is not able to deal with.
- Young people who come from families with a low income or families where parents were unemployed, tend to be prone to peer-group pressure and may easily engage themselves in delinquent activities. The children often have to leave home to create opportunities to generate some income to survive financially. This may lead to unlawful practises and as a result, clashes with the law. Some parents of these children were employed, but because of the severe alcohol abuse, the family were constantly faced with financial breakdowns. To be outside on the street without a secure

home and the constant stressful task to provide for your own means, often leads to alcohol abuse by the juvenile to survive with the latter. The result is that the alcohol abuse became a surviving mechanism. The respondents even indicated that they learn through experience, that one can experience less stress when under the influence of alcohol. Poverty thus can contribute directly to alcohol abuse by young people and together with this, to juvenile delinquency.

- The majority of the respondents had already dropped out of school before their imprisonment. Such factors that contributed to this, includes poverty, lack of parental support and stimulation and peer-group pressure (Bartollas1993:262). Some of the respondents continue with their school education after their imprisonment. The respondents received minimal if any form of stimulation from their family systems. As a result, many of them did not value the importance of education and dropped out of school. Some were forced through poverty and labelling to leave school very early. Currently, all these respondents have the opportunity of enrolling again for formal or informal education during their incarceration.
- The family structure can have a negative effect on childrearing, either directly through abuse or indirectly through role modelling of the parents. Factors like parental unemployment, poverty, the child's birth order and alcohol abuse, can have a negative effect on childrearing (Jones 1993:6). The research confirms that alcohol abuse by parents or significant others definitely hinder their parenting skills and prevent children from growing up in functional

family systems. Most of the children indicated that they experienced their parents and sometimes both parents absent when they abused alcohol. Some respondents left their homes because of the aggressive behaviour of the parents when they were under the influence of alcohol.

- Some of the respondents abused alcohol themselves. The reason for this is that they identified with people who abused alcohol themselves. The study confirms further that the respondents who abused alcohol, started first by experimenting with the substance but later became dependent on it for a number of reasons as already explained. Some of them only started to abuse alcohol as a way to relax and have fun.
- Alcohol abuse by parent(s) or significant others, has been identified as a factor which contributes to criminal involvement by their children and as a result, imprisonment. These young people indicated that they do not receive the opportunity of experiencing trust in themselves and others and also that they still do not have the knowledge or skills to deal with their painful feelings. According to the research findings, juvenile delinquency became one way to deal with these feelings (Rocha-Silva 1998:53). The research substantiates the latter by indicating that these young people did not receive enough stimulation and nurturing as adolescents during their developmental process. As a result, they seek for support, acceptance and security among their peers on the streets. This may lead further to the fact that they became more susceptible to negative influences.

- The research study confirms further that most respondents, as well as their family members who abuse alcohol, have not been exposed to professional treatment for alcohol abuse. Many of the respondents were referred to a drug rehabilitation centre without responding positively to treatment. Some were referred to a traditional healer in the belief that the person could be bewitched and that the family believed that the person would be healed of alcohol dependency. This might prevent their therapeutic bond during treatment. The majority of the respondents indicated that no one in their families including themselves, were exposed to available resources for treatment. The respondents and their family members did not know anything about alcohol rehabilitation and are also not informed regarding the availability of the resources for such treatment. The majority of the respondents have never been exposed to treatment.
- Young offenders who come from alcoholic families, basic needs were not met and they find the environment in prison to be more secured compared to their homes. They revealed to the researcher that they do not have to feed, clothe and educate themselves while they are in prison. There are also no exposure in the prison to alcohol abuse and those who abused it themselves, can now heal from it.
- The majority of the respondents have committed crimes while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, such as dagga. Most of them associate their criminal involvement with the abuse of alcohol by their parents or significant others. This indicates that

there is a strong connection between alcohol abuse in the family and juvenile delinquency (Rocha–Silva 1998:50). According to the researcher, the latter supports the statement that parents serve as important role models for young people. Whatever they do will strongly reflect on their children. Once children are exposed to parents or significant others who are constantly under the influence of alcohol, there is a strong possibility that these children will identify with the pattern of alcohol abuse. The same behaviour can be projected on their relationships with their peers, but also on their adult life. Alcohol abuse can become a way to cope with the difficult and dangerous life on the streets.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be formulated:

- That the family system as context in which the juvenile offender grew up, must be taken in consideration during the rehabilitation process. It will provide a broader picture of the juvenile's physical as well as emotional world, which can assist the therapist to be more effective in the facilitation of the helping process.
- Further research needs to be conducted in this field. According to the researcher, more can still be research regarding the effect of the frequency, duration and intensity of alcohol abuse within the family system, on children.
- That juvenile offenders as well as alcoholics must be therapeutically treated in the context of their families or other

systems of which they part of. The family is an important system to support the juvenile as well as the alcoholic during the rehabilitation process. These systems must be part of changes that can take place.

- Many short-falls regarding the helping process of juveniles in the Department of Correctional Services, were identified during the research process. There is a shortage of professional social workers in most of the institutions where juvenile offenders are detained and as a result, it makes it nearly an impossible task to provide effective therapy to each one of these juvenile offenders. More focus is placed on problem-solving, rather than the development and empowerment of these young people to discover more about themselves and specifically, their potential and strengths. It is recommended that the social workers in Correctional Institutions should give more attention to the juvenile offenders in order to empower them to help themselves and experience more emotional security.
- That as part of the rehabilitation programmes rendered in the Department of Correctional Services, respondents need to be assisted to form a support group of children of alcoholics while in custody to share their experiences, frustrations and losses with each other.
- The parents of juveniles must be included in the healing process of their children. Change need also to be facilitated within the family system of the juvenile.

- That a thorough after-care programme for these young offenders needs to be designed and implemented. This can promote a proper support system for these juveniles during parole or correctional supervision. This can be further a way of preventing them from committing crimes again and would ensure that they receive support and guidance from the helping professions.
- That specialized training need to be offered to the helping professions and specifically personnel of The Department of Correctional Services, to provide more effective therapeutic interventions to juvenile offenders and their families. This will enable the juvenile offender to experience more emotional stability and minimize the possibility to get involved in criminal activities in the future.

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Annexure 1: Interview schedule

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The effect of alcoholism in the family on young offenders

1. Composition of the family structure

What is your home language?

What is your place of birth/ where did you live?

What is the marital status of your parents? (Single, married, divorced, etc)

How is your family constituted?

How many children are there in your family and what is your birth order?

Did you live as a nuclear or extended family? How many?

Who is your favourite person in the family? Why?

Are your parents employed or not? Type of employment?

If either one of the parents is unemployed, who used to maintain you? (Relatives, yourself, other)

What are the living arrangements? (Hosing/ accommodation)

How do you regard your family economically? (Poor, managing, affluent)

How would you describe your childhood experience? (Pleasant, abusive, etc)

Did you experience abandonment/neglect, divorce, death or removal from the family as a child? What are/were the effects?

Are your parent's alcoholic/abuse substances or involved in criminal activities? Explain? How does that affect their parenting skills?

How did your parents discipline you? (Talking, physical punishment, not concerned, etc)

Did you attend school?

Did your siblings attend school?

In what grade were you at the time?

2. The perception of the respondents regarding the quality of the family system

Who is the favourite person to the respondent in the family? Why?

Who is the closest among the parents to the respondent? Why?

Who in the family is more distant from other members? Why?

Does the respondent regard other/some family members to be involved in conflicting relationships? If so, why?

Does the respondent perceive the family members as in a position of sharing deep emotions? Why? How?

If there is a conflict situation in the family, do they resolve it together? How?

Is there a prescribed manner of doing things in the family? What things and how?

If there is a crisis in the family, who calms things down?

Does the family have particular ways of approaching problems?

Who does the family turn to in times of need?

Does the respondent regard his family system as stable?

3. The respondents' experience of alcohol abuse in the family

According to the respondent, who is abusing alcohol in the family?

How long has this person been in that state?

Have the same person ever received treatment? If so, what form of treatment and when?

How long did this person receive treatment?

What was the response towards treatment?

What is the respondent's perception regarding treatment?

How did the alcohol abuse in the family affect the respondent? (Emotionally, socially, psychologically, other)

Did the abuse of alcohol in the family push him to the streets to look for support from his peers?

Does he think that if it weren't for his parents/ significant other's drinking pattern he wouldn't be in prison?

Does he tell lies to other people in order to hide his parents/ significant other's alcohol problem?

How does it feel to talk about his parent's alcohol problem?

Does he try not to think about his parents/significant other's alcohol problem?

How is alcohol abuse in the family currently affecting the respondent?

Does anybody visit him currently in the prison?

4. The respondent's perception of himself

What is his perception about himself?

Does he accept the way he is?

Do other people follow his advices?

Does he feel like a failure? If yes why?

Does he feel other people would like to be with him?

Does he think that other people like him?

What does he regard as his strengths?

What does he regard as his weaknesses?

5. The social and emotional functioning of the respondent

How does the respondent feel about the environment he is currently living in? (Safe, hostile, depressing)

Who does he turn to in case of need? (Family, friends, other)

Does he have many friends?

Do most people like him?

Is it difficult for him to make friends?

Does he feel different than others?

Does he know someone who will support him in an emergency situation?

Does he regard his friends as taking him for a ride? If so why?

Does he regard his friends as people he can count on?

Does he take advantage of his friends?

With what type of activities does he keep himself busy?

6. The respondent's perception of his own drinking pattern

What is the respondent's perception about alcohol?

How did his alcoholic problem start?

Who introduced the respondent to alcohol?

When did he become aware of the fact that he is abusing alcohol/other forms of substances/drugs?

Was there a way that alcohol helped him in coping with his life situations? How?

Did he ever make an attempt to stop abusing the substance and what happened after that?

How is he feeling currently not using alcohol?

7. Other information

Is there any other information the respondent would like to share with the researcher?

ANNEXURE 2: LETTER OF CONSENT

Participants's

Date:

Name:

Principal

Onicca Ofentse Tlhoale

Investigator:

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0001

Informed Consent:

Title of the Study: The Effect of Alcoholism in the Family on Young Offenders.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to explore the effect of alcoholism in the family system on young offenders.

Procedures: I will be interviewed during the research study with the aim to provide necessary answers to the questions asked by the researcher. The interview will take approximately sixty (60) minutes.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no known risks and discomforts associated with this study. Furthermore, the time span of the interview will only last for sixty minutes at the most.

Benefits: I understand that there are no known direct social benefits to me for participating in this study. However the results of the study may help the researcher gain a better understanding of the effect of alcoholism within the family system on young people.

Participants Rights: I may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

Financial Compensation: I understand that there will be no known financial compensation for my participation in this study.

Confidentiality: I understand that the information given by me will be treated confidentially and if there is any information the researcher would like to reveal, she will have to get my permission. The results of this study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, but my records or identity will not be revealed unless required by law.

If I have any questions of concerns, I can call **Onicca Ofentse Tlhoale** at **082 745 1144** at any time of the day or night.

Respondent's Signature

Date

Tlhoale O.O. (Researcher)

Date

Annexure 3: Letter of Approval

(no letter of approval available)