

Women Inmates' Experiences of Juvenile Delinquency: A Research with Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract

This study is aimed to examine the juvenile delinquency experiences of female prisoners who have committed a crime before the age of 18, were tried and convicted and are still in prison with a phenomenological approach. The working group consists of 10 female convicts in a Women's Closed Penitentiary Institution in Turkey who were involved in a crime when they were under the age of 18 and are still in prison due to this crime. As a data collection tool, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), one of the qualitative data analysis methods, was used in the analysis of the research data. In this context, the data obtained were examined with a holistic approach, and each participant's data were interpreted separately and evaluated with similar and different aspects. The MAXQDA program was used in the analysis of the data. It was revealed that women's family and friends are effective in their juvenile delinquency and the family relations of the children and the presence of an individual with a criminal history in the family are also among the risk factors. It is determined that women between the ages of 18-25 were driven to juvenile delinquency by their friends over 18, especially when they were between the ages of 14-16. Delinquency has been evaluated as a negative situation that is seen in children with the effect of family relations and social environment and causes social, psychological and behavioural problems in children.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency, Delinquency, Peer Environment, Girls, Women, Family Criminal History

1. Introduction

One of the important social and cultural problems today is juvenile delinquency. There are various factors such as family, friendship relations, social environment,

socioeconomic status and personal characteristics in the delinquency of children (Cashmore et al., 2020; Walters, 2022). Especially in childhood, being dependent on peers and friends and being affected by the close socio-cultural environment can make children riskier in this regard (Rubin et al., 2009). Parents' education level, crowded family environment, negative parental attitudes, sibling relations and the influence of close friends may cause an increase in the developmental and behavioural risks in children, and accordingly, an increase in the tendency to negative behaviours, which are described as crimes (Lauger, 2014; Walters, 2022). Situations such as physical, emotional, sexual and psychological abuse of children in unhealthy family environments and the presence of people involved in crime among family members cause children to engage in criminal behavior and interact with criminals. As a result, the attitudes and behaviors in these environments become models for children, causing them to unconsciously recognize crime and criminal behavior and accept such behavior as normal.

In addition to family and close social environment interactions related to delinquency in children, systems such as social media and the Internet have an impact today (Çelik and Onay, 2017; Silva and Guedes, 2022). Nowadays, most individuals have access to technology and the Internet, it is possible for parents to give their children uncontrolled devices such as phones and tablets, and children can interact with crime and criminal behaviors with these tools (Walters, 2022). Despite the rapid increase and prevalence of crime types and rates in the world, protecting children and adolescents from these risks will have a significant impact on reducing crime rates in the future. Various studies have shown that individuals start to commit crimes or tend to commit crimes, especially during adolescence (Sutton & Farrall, 2004). Committing a crime is a phenomenon that is related to age (McIvor, Murray, & Jamieson, 2013). Studies have shown that delinquency begins at the age of 14-15, is most common at the age of 16-17, and delinquency begins to slow down at the age of 18-19 (Cashmore et al., 2020; Haines et al., 2021).

The peer is considered as the person the child sees in his or her own age group, status or equal. Peer groups are an environment where the first social interactions take place after the family. Individuals present social behaviour examples in peer groups by demonstrating the social behaviours they learned in the family (Houser et al., 2019). Children gain friendships, cooperation, play together, solve problems, regulating their

emotions through peer interactions. Children need to establish relationships with friends and peer groups to meet some of their needs, these relationships are important for their socialization (Cashmore vd., 2020). However, these relationships are not always desirable and educationally positive. As a matter of fact, in the studies on peer relations, it has been stated that the relations in the peer group are important for the development and sharing of the child's attitudes, behaviours and values (Reale et al., 2022). These relationships are important in the development of children (Ost & Gillespie, 2019).

Friendship is a close, optional and mutually voluntary relationship. Children voluntarily form, maintain, and terminate friendships to meet their different expectations and needs. Peer groups present models that show the child how to communicate with other people (Socia et al., 2020). Relationships in peer groups provide the child with multidimensional gains. It creates opportunities for the child to learn and apply social skills, rules, cooperation, sexual and social roles (Haines et al., 2021). In addition, the child gains new social roles through peer groups. It has been stated that the reasons such as the child's exposure to violence in the family or social environment, growing up in a broken family environment due to reasons such as divorce and death in the family, and the presence of criminals in the child's family or close environment is effective in the delinquency of children (Muniz et al., 2022; Walters, 2022).

The crime rates and types of crimes differ between boys and girls. In various studies, it is stated that boys are more likely to be driven to crime than girls (Rezey & Lauritsen, 2022). Since the phenomenon of crime seems to be specific to boys in general, studies are mostly focused on boys. Nine out of ten children arrested for more serious crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, carrying weapons, sexual crimes and gambling are boys (Shaw and Johnson, 2022). There are social and cultural reasons for these differences in juvenile delinquency rates. It was stated that the difference in delinquency between boys and girls is due to social control over girls (Na & Giroux, 2016). However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the rate of delinquency of girls and the diversity in the types of crimes committed (Kalman, 2018). Since the studies on delinquency mainly focus on the male gender, the fact that the sample in this study consists of women reveals the importance of the study. There is a need for in-depth information about the delinquency of girls and their experiences with their friends and peers in this process. Obtaining this information and explaining it with the research findings in the literature will make the

existing findings more comprehensible and interpretable (Reale et al., 2022; Sutton & Farrall, 2004). In this context, collecting data directly from juvenile delinquents will enable this issue to be revealed from the children's point of view. Therefore, phenomenological research on how, why, in which situations, with whom and when events occur is extremely important.

The number of children brought/come to the security units in Turkey on the grounds of crime is increasing every year compared to the previous year. When analyzed by gender, 65,4% of the children who came or were brought to the security units in 2016 were boys and 34,6% were girls. 47,5% of these children were victims and 32,5% of them came or were brought with the claim that they committed an act defined as a crime in the law. According to 2016 data, the number of children brought to security units due to delinquency is 108.675. 15,4% of Turkey's population is composed of young people and in 2020, the young population between the ages of 15-24 is 12.893.750 people. The number of incidents involving children who came to or were brought to security units in 2020 is 450.803. 37,9% of these children are victims, 25,3% are delinquent children, and 18,5% are registered with the security units with the allegation of committing a misdemeanour (TUIK, 2022). Similar findings and data provided by international organizations remain valid for various countries and societies. Especially girls' social environment and peer selection processes should be closely monitored, and peer relationships should be monitored especially by parents and educators. By monitoring the risk factors against negative attitudes and behaviors that may arise in children, drifting into crime can be prevented to a significant extent. This research will make significant contributions to the literature by examining the childhood delinquency experiences of female prisoners.

2. Method

In the research, phenomenological design - one of the qualitative research methods - was used. Qualitative data analysis methods were used in the analysis of the data. The data were analyzed with a holistic approach, the data of each participant was interpreted separately and evaluated with similar and different aspects. In addition, the MAXQDA application was used in the analysis of the data.

2.1 Research Design

As one of the qualitative research methods, interpretive phenomenological analysis was used in this research. This design ensures that a certain phenomenon or situation is revealed in depth with its various aspects (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Phenomenological research provides the opportunity to understand a phenomenon in depth by examining the experiences of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon in all its aspects and the meanings they attribute to this phenomenon (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2013; Lyotard, 2007; Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2002). “A phenomenological study identifies the shared meaning of several people's lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept. The main purpose is to reduce individual experiences regarding the phenomenon to a universal explanation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 77).

Rather than revealing definitive laws regarding human behavior, phenomenological research can provide examples and explanations that will help to recognize and understand a phenomenon better. Accordingly, this research process, the facts were tried to be explained from the participants' own experiences and perspectives. Phenomenological research designs requires to understand what the phenomenon, which is studied in this research, means in participants' life. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants within the scope of the study. The interviews shed light on the participants life course and how they experience what they have been through.

In the context of this current data, this study is aimed to examine the experiences of friends and the criminal history of the family of female prisoners (who are currently over the age of 18) who have committed a crime before the age of 18, and who are still detained in prison, with a phenomenological approach. In accordance with the purpose of the research, the answers to the following sub-problems were searched.

1. What is the juvenile delinquency experience of female prisoners who have experienced juvenile delinquency and are still in prison?
2. What is the role of the peer environment in the delinquency of female prisoners in their childhood?
3. What is the role of family and family members' criminal history in the delinquency of female prisoners in their childhood?

Ethics Approval Certificate No. 2022/36876 was obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Researches and Scientific Publication Ethics Committee of the TR Ankara Social Sciences University Rectorate. (Social Sciences University Of Ankara Institute of Ethics Committee Of Social Sciences And Humanities Research And Publication-Certificate Of Ethics Approval)

2.2 Working group

The study group of research consists of prisoners in a Women's Closed Penitentiary Institution in Turkey. Participants must meet the following criteria. These are;

Each participant must be a woman who is between the ages of 18-25, has been convicted and has been involved in a crime under the age of 18, and is still in prison for this crime.

Female prisoners who meet these criteria have been identified by the prison administration and invited to research. 10 female prisoners who agreed to participate in the research constitute the sample of the research. In the Informed Consent Form, it was explained to the participants that their personal information would be confidential and that their participation in the study was completely voluntary, and voluntary participation in the research was ensured.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants

Participants (P)	Age	Place of birth	Parental union*	Number of siblings	Level of education
P1	18	City	Parents are together	10	Dropout from Elementary school, 5th grade
P2	18	City	Parents are separate	2	Dropout from high school, 1st grade
P3	25	City	Together	3	Unschoolled
P4	24	City	Separate	2	Unschoolled
P5	22	City	Together	2	Literate
P6	22	City	Separate	8	Literate
P7	22	City	Together	7	Literate
P8	18	City	Together	5	Dropout from elementary school, 1st grade
P9	20	City	Separate	Only child	Dropout from high school, 4th grade
P10	18	City	Together	5	Unschoolled

Parental Union*: In this table' context, the parental union only implies the physical location of the parents, means that are they living with their child or not.

Considering the mutual characteristics of the participants, in Turkey, while children in the 14-16 age group are studying in the 1st and 2nd grades of high school in general, it is

seen that all of the participants drop out of school at different education levels. Three of the participants had never attended school and three of them had learned to read and write in prison without going to school.

2.3 Data Collection Tool

As a data collection tool, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used in the research. After reviewing the relevant literature, the interview form was prepared. Opinions were received from three experts with more than 15 years of experience in child development, sociology and psychology. An interview form was prepared in accordance with expert opinions.

Interviews with the participants within the scope of the research by the author were carried out between June and July 2022 in the prison environment, with the company of psychosocial service, in a closed interview room with a glass partition and face-to-face, by obtaining the necessary permissions from the prison. In the interview, the participants were asked to “describe the delinquency process”. In this context, detailed information about the situations tried to be acquired by asking questions such as how, who, when and where.

2.4 Analysis of the Data

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used in the analysis of the research data. The interpretive phenomenological analysis is a qualitative technique that enables individuals to distinguish the ways they make sense of their experiences and offers an exploratory approach. This analysis does not impose “predetermined variables” through deductive reasoning. The IPA requires the researcher to enter the participant's world of life, so the questions posed to the participant must be open-ended. The questions are not guiding. The sole purpose of the questions is to provide participants with an opportunity to share their personal experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. Rather than checking whether they agree with a particular topic, the questions enable participants to describe and elaborate on their experiences in alternative ways (Willig, 2008). The data acquired in this context were examined with a holistic approach, and the data of each participant were interpreted separately and evaluated with the aspects of being similar and being different.

Stages of data analysis: i) The transcribed interview texts were read repeatedly. Various notes were taken during these readings. ii) The themes are identified and labelled. iii) The determined themes are clustered. iv) The statements of the participants were summarized, and direct quotations explaining the theme were determined.

In addition, the MAXQDA program was used in the analysis of the data. This program provides important advantages such as providing themes, coding and word maps in the analysis of qualitative data, allowing the common evaluation of the emphases made in whole data.

3. Findings

Phenomenological research was conducted with 10 participants who committed a crime before 18 (when they were children) in a Women's Closed Penal Institution, were put on a trial, are currently over 18 and remain in prison. In the interviews conducted with female prisoners between the ages of 18-25, information about the juvenile delinquency experiences of the participants is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Juvenile delinquency experiences of female prisoners

	The age of the first offence	Number of criminal records	Type/types of crime	Duration of jail time
P1	17	1	Murder	1 year
P2	13	19	Drugs*, extortion, theft	5 months
P3	15	34	Theft	4 months
P4	7	36	Theft	9 years
P5	15	10	Extortion, shoot, theft, drugs	1.5 months
P6	15	Many	Theft	9 months
P7	10	14	Theft, drugs	5 years
P8	15	Many	Theft	6,5 months
P9	15	Many	Theft, drugs	3 weeks
P10	14	Many	Theft	5 months

Drugs*: In this table' context, drugs can imply using or/and selling drugs. The inmates didn't specify whether they were using or/and selling drugs because the two crimes have different sentence times.

The codes and themes acquired during the interviews with female prisoners regarding the juvenile delinquency experiences of the participants are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes of female prisoners' juvenile delinquency experiences

Theme	Sub-theme
Peer Environment	Being older than the individual Friends older than 18 Meeting with criminal activities at an early age Early delinquency

Family	Meeting with criminal activities at an early age Early delinquency
Type of crime	Theft

As a result of the interviews with the participants, it was determined that people such as elder friends, female friends, male friends and sister-in-law are effective in being driven to crime. Among these factors, the most emphasized feature is friends (over 18 years old) who are older than themselves. Therefore, it has been determined that the most important factor as the cause of delinquency for girls before the age of 18 is individuals older than them and over the age of 18.

In terms of the type of crime, the most seen crime type was "theft" in the delinquency of women before the age of 18. In addition, it has been determined that there are types of crimes such as" substance use "and" extramarital pregnancy at an early age and being responsible for the death of the baby". When the statements are examined, it appears that there are women who were involved in several types of crimes.

All of the participants stated that they were victims of their friends and peers in their narratives about their childhood life experiences. They stated with certainty that they were driven to crime under the influence of these friends and peer groups and that they are now in prison.

Among the participants, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, and P10 stated that their friends and peer group had a direct effect on their delinquency in childhood, and P1 stated that their friend had an indirect effect on her delinquency:

P1, "The baby was the result of my boyfriend's (baby's father) insistence. He said don't tell anyone."

P2 specifically talked about the crimes she committed with her boyfriend and stated that she was responsible boyfriend's delinquency by saying, "I am in prison because of my boyfriend,".

P4 stated precisely that he started to commit crimes at a very early age and that his peer environment had an effect on this: "While I was thieving, I had accomplices. We were a group of women. Together with my friends from the neighbourhood, we were going to other cities to steal."

P5 clearly stated that the person who was her friend and also her cousin at the same time, driven her into crime as follows. “At 15, my cousin said, “Let’s smoke marijuana.” She took a child’s phone and ran away. So, we got involved in crime.” P5 stated that his cousin, one of her family members, encouraged her to use drugs and then she started stealing.

P9 stated that he started using drugs at a young age, then stealing to get money, and the influence of his friend group on her being driven to crime is as follows. “I have been using drugs since I was 15 years old. My circle of friends from the neighbourhood directed me to drugs. I found out that my childhood friend smoked drugs and she got me used to it.” P9 openly stated that her friend group is effective in being driven to crime.

P8 also stated the effect and regret of the friends she had made in the neighbourhood where she had just moved when she was 15 when she was driven to crime, and expressed as follows: “I wish I had not met, we moved to another district, I learned about theft from my new friends here, my girlfriends taught me. They had crimes of theft, and they took me as well. My friend group was a girl group.”

Although P10 was a homebody before the age of 14, she stated that later she was driven to crime as follows: “My aunt and friend taught me how to steal, they taught me, such a thing happened to me.”

P1 stated that she got pregnant out of wedlock from her boyfriend when she was 16 years old, that this was at her boyfriend’s request, and that she directed her not to tell anyone during the process. She stated that when she was 17 at the end of her pregnancy, she gave birth to a baby alone on the mountain and the baby died there. She stated that her boyfriend was responsible for the death of the baby, getting pregnant and what happened in the next period, and that she is in prison today because of him. P2 stated that she is 18 years old and that her friend who driven her into crime was fifteen years older than her: “All of the friends around me were older than me. My accomplice was 33 years old.”

P4 stated that the group of friends and peers who driven her into crime was older than her and that there was at least five years of an age difference between them. She stated: “I had a boyfriend, I said that I am an adult, I am not a child anymore. My friends from the neighbourhood were older than me, they were 18-20 when I was 13.”

P1 was 14 years old while her boyfriend was 18 years old and there were a 4-year age difference between them. She got pregnant out of wedlock at the request of her 20-year-old boyfriend when she was 16. She stated that she was under arrest on the grounds that she had caused the death of the baby she gave birth to when she was 17, and also stated that her boyfriend had driven her into crime: "The baby was the result of my boyfriend's (baby's father) insistence. He said don't tell anyone." Therefore, she stated that her boyfriend, who is 4 years older than her, caused her to be driven to crime.

P9, who is 20 years old, stated that she has been using drugs since the age of 15, and her friends and peers who led her to crime were 4-5 years older than her. She stated that: "My friends from the neighbourhood directed me to drugs, they were 4-5 years older than me."

P10 stated that the person who taught her how to steal was her aunt and a friend, and they were the reason why she was driven to crime. She stated: "My aunt and my friend taught me stealing, they taught me, such a thing happened to me." P10's aunt is her brother's wife and is older than P10. P10 stated that a relative who was older than her was influential in her delinquency.

P1 started a relationship with a man 4 years older than her when she was 14 years old and became pregnant out of wedlock at the age of 16 at the request of her boyfriend. The baby was born and died. She was found guilty and imprisoned because she was held responsible for the death of the baby born. Thus, P1 stated that she was driven to crime at an early age by her boyfriend who is older than her when she was 14 years old.

When P2 was 13 years old, she was driven to crime by her boyfriend who was 15 years older than her, went in and out of prison many times between the ages of 14-18, and she had many criminal cases up to the age of 18. She stated that she was driven to crime by her friend as early as 13 years old. P4 stated that she started stealing at the age of 7, went to prison at the age of 15, and her friends older than her caused her to be driven to crime. P4, who was driven to crime at a very early age (7 years old), stated that she had many criminal cases up to the age of 24.

P5 stated that she started smoking marijuana at the age of 15 at the request of her cousin, she was stealing to find money, and entering prison for the first time at the age of 16. Hence, she stated that her cousin driven her into crime as early as the age of 15 and that she had 10 separate criminal cases until the age of 22.

P9 stated that she has been using drugs since she was 15, stealing to get money, that her friends 4-5 years older than her got her used to drugs and that she met the police for the first time at the age of 16. She stated that she was driven to crime at an early age at the age of 15 for the first time, she was imprisoned at the age of 18, she had many criminal cases and the reason for these was her friends and peer group. P8 stated that she learned how to steal from her 15-16 years old girlfriends in the neighbourhood where she had just moved, and that she later learned that they were guilty of theft. Therefore, she was driven to crime as early as the age of 15, under the influence of her friends and peers.

P10 stated that she was a homebody before the age of 14, under the influence of her aunt and a friend, she committed theft at the age of 14-15, and that she met the police and the court thus. Therefore, she stated that she was driven to crime as early as the age of 14, due to the influence of her friends, and entered prison at the age of 17.

In line with the findings, it was found that the group of friends and peers who were older than the participants were driven them into crime, and those who driven the participants into crime were 15 years older than the participants (P2), at least 5 years older (P4), 4 years older (P1), 4-5 years older (P9). P10, on the other hand, stated that the one who driven her into crime was older than herself. According to the findings, it was determined that the participants were driven to crime by their friends and peer groups.

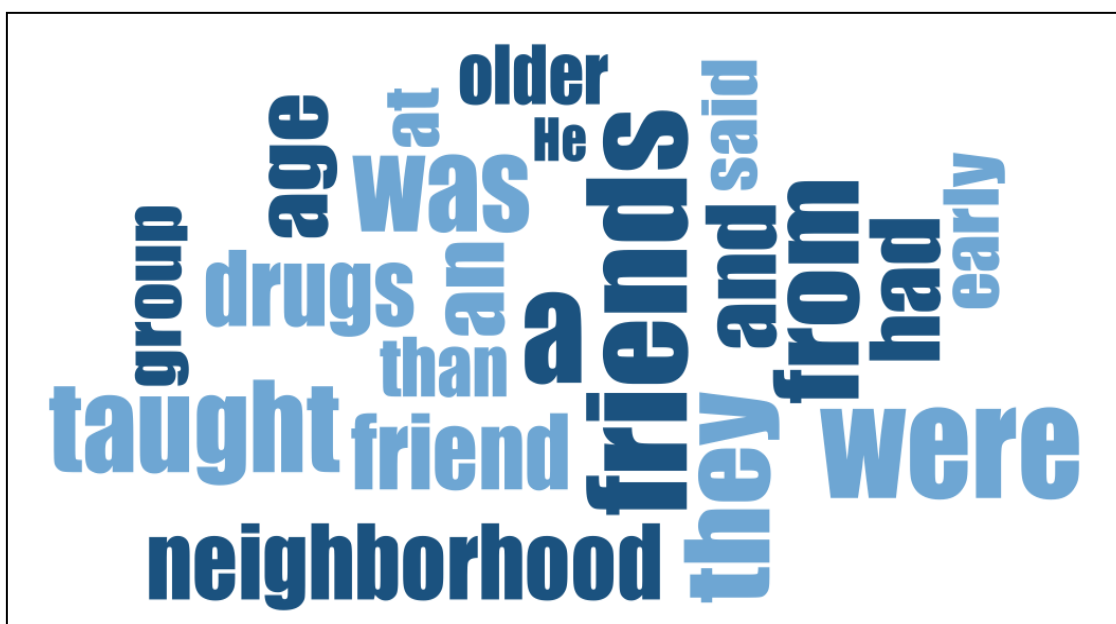


Figure 1: Frequency of Expressions Emphasized in the Analysis of Women's Responses about their Delinquency

The answers given by women about delinquency were analyzed with the MAXQDA program and the frequency of their statements was examined. When Figure 1 is examined, there is someone else's influence on being driven to crime, the influence of friends and social environment is high, and theft is emphasized at early ages, especially as a type of crime.

Participants P3, P4, P7, and P9 stated that the family has a role in delinquency in their narratives about their childhood life experiences, and the family is effective in meeting crime at an early age. The information given by the participants about their families is given below with direct quotations:

P3, "Our elders used to steal, my grandparents were thieves, my parents saw that, the profession hand over to us. My mother-in-law has been in prison for theft for 2.5 years, my mother is in prison. We did what we were taught. They didn't educate us, they also steal, we wouldn't have done it if they had educated us, it's their fault. My parents are also responsible. The men in the family don't steal, why? I don't know. We want to get a job, but we have criminal records so, they don't hire us."

P4, "I started stealing at the age of 7, I was arrested at the age of 13, I went to prison, I got out. My mother, my dad, and my brother have criminal records. My parents went to prison for theft, and different files, then got out. My brother was collecting papers, his friend had drugs with him, I do not believe my brother did this, my brother does not do such a thing, he was victimized by his friends. I am a pocket-picker. I steal gold, steal money from women, like a profession. I learned from watching my mom, and my dad. I did it, I did the same thing. Being a thief comes from family and friends. We were a group of women; we were going to other cities to steal with my friends from the neighbourhood. I didn't steal all the time, I did it when I needed to, and some days I gave myself time off. I was saying today was my day off, I wouldn't steal on vacation. I didn't stop. I kept going because no one advised me. My mother lost her mother, experienced great traumas, and went to prison at the age of 13. She voluntarily, compulsorily committed theft. It is very hard to find a job when you have a criminal record. They call you are prone to crime."

P5, "My mother went to prison for arms trafficking. My father drank alcohol and beat my mother and us. Because of the violence, we put ourselves on the street. Since I was exposed to violence at home, I also used violence outside."

P7, “The adults cut themselves, they fought, and we did the same. No one at home told me about my mistake when my mother was away. If someone beat me outside the house, my family said, “Go beat them up too”. If they had told me things that were wrong, I wouldn't have done it. They said everything was fine. I wouldn't be like this if I were raised in a nice family. The fact that my family and brother were not decent made me go to prison. We did what we saw from the elders. It was my aunt-in-law who directed me to the theft. The elders used to teach us about theft, how they did it like a normal thing and taught us the way not to get punished. They would talk and laugh while eating sunflower seeds and drinking Coke. It was funny to us. We grew up seeing these things. There have been people around me who have shot themselves, hanged themselves, committed suicide, and got into shoot-ups with the police. These seemed like games to me.”

P9 said, “My father was in prison for drug dealing. It was very difficult to grow up without a mother. All of my family members are responsible for my situation. Grandmother, father, mother... I blame my mother mostly because she went away. My father found out that I was using drugs, after my friends, in the second week, caught me in a crisis. He was very angry with me that day. He hit me, slapped me in the face. It was the first and last slap. He was also convicted of using drugs. I said to him, look at yourself what were you in your time, and what you were expecting me to be, and then he slapped me, I was 15 years old.”

In this study, P4's mother, father and older brother were sent to prison for the crimes they committed. P3's grandfather was stealing, and his mother and mother-in-law are in prison. P5's mother, wife and cousin were in prison for the crimes they committed. P6's grandfathers were stealing, and his wife and mother-in-law are in prison for crimes they committed. P7's father, mother and siblings are in prison, and P7 stays in the same prison ward with his mother. P8's husband committed a crime but is not in prison. P9's father is in prison for the crime he committed. P10 is in prison, where she committed a crime with her aunt-in-law. P1 and P2 stated that there was no one in their family with a criminal history.

In line with these statements, it can be said that children take their crime and criminal behaviours as models from their close environment and that they tend to criminal

behaviours with the guidance and influence of their relatives/friends. In this respect, it is understood that first of all family, then close social environment, kinship relations and educational environments are highly effective in raising children. Substance use, theft and damaging behaviours are among the important problematic behaviours that the individual is influenced by, especially in her immediate environment and childhood. As a matter of fact, as with the people interviewed in this study, various research findings on the subject indicate that children's criminal behaviour is influenced by a close social environment, such as family and friends.

4. Discussion

The family is the most important institution with which the child first interacts, starting from the prenatal period, socializes, learns the attitudes, thoughts and behaviours of the society he is a member of, and the process of integration into the society is carried out. With these features, the family plays an important role in supporting all physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development areas of the child (Cashmore et al., 2020). The family is an important institution where basic needs such as nutrition, care, love, education and gaining cultural values are met. Protecting the child, supporting it in every field and ensuring its socialization are among the important duties of the family. The family is the first and most important institution responsible for the care and development of the child (Ost and Gillespie, 2019).

In the context of social learning, children observe the behaviour of others, especially family members. They model and learn which behaviours give the desired result. When behaviours are modelled by children and reinforced by giving them reinforcing stimuli, learning takes place and is transformed into behaviour. Children see how their parents treat each other, and these behaviours are seen as acceptable. Participants shared their experiences in line with the literature, stating that their families did not educate them about wrong and right behaviour during childhood, that they did not warn them when they did wrong, and that even family members themselves directed them to criminal behaviours. They did not know that what they were doing was a crime; they did what they were taught, what they saw from adults, and thus they were dragged into crime. . It is understood from the participants that those who experience violence within the family

also commit violence outside the family, therefore they imitate the behaviours they have seen and learned in the family.

When one of the family members goes to prison, it disrupts the family life cycle and creates a situation of crisis for all family members. When one of the parents goes to prison, this case causes social and emotional trauma in the children (Mumola, 2000). In particular, the mother's imprisonment affects not only the mother as an individual, but also her children to a great extent (O'Brien and Bates, 2003). Dodge and Progrebin (2001), who stated that the family integrity was disrupted when the mother went to prison, state that most women were abandoned by their spouses and the family integrity in question could not be restored. Although siblings have a positively important place in child development, interaction with delinquent siblings also has a negative contagion effect. This situation is more likely to occur in extended families. Because in such families, children are influenced more by siblings than parents as sources of social behaviour (Canter, 2011). It is understood that the close family members of the participants, such as their mothers, fathers and siblings, are constantly in and out of prison due to the crimes they committed, and that some participants' parents are in prison at the same time, in which case they spend their childhood with other family relatives, and they also commit crimes in a similar way. First of all, their parents were not with them during their childhood, and from time to time, when they were released from prison, they started to commit crimes again and went to prison again. It is understood that committing crime has become a lifestyle for the participants, as they do not have family members to educate and guide them correctly.

The fact that family members are criminals or drug addicts is an important factor in the tendency of children to commit crimes (Dönmezer, 1994). When the cause-effect relationship between delinquency and substance abuse is examined, it is stated that alcohol or drug use by parents is a risk factor for delinquency. It was determined that the majority of drug users have substance users in their families (Acar, Demir, Görmez, Keser, 2015). Parents who are addicted to substances increase the potential of children to become addicted to substances, both because they are the role models for their children and because they are afraid to talk to their children about substance use or not criticise substance use enough in their dialogues (Alikaifoğlu, 2005). One of the most important causes of substance abuse is the family factor. Ögel and Erol (2005) stated that substance

use is more common in children who have various problems and conflicted communication with their families and that one of the main reasons for young children to start using substances is family problems. In a study conducted by Turhan et al., it has been determined that people with a history of smoking and alcohol use in their father and sibling have a higher rate of smoking and alcohol use and that drug use is higher in those whose close relatives have reported drug use (Turhan, İnandı, Özer, & Akoğlu, 2011). In this study, it has been determined that the family has an important role in the delinquency of female prisoners during childhood. It is understood that those who use substances in the participants' family or circle of friends encourage the participants to use substances and act as role models. Participants turned to substance use during childhood for two reasons. First; In order to encourage children to steal, it is to accustom them to substance use and to enable them to obtain money through theft to purchase substances. Latter; The reason for being accepted into the friend group is to start using substances. It is a known fact that young people who use substances steal in order to find the money they need to purchase substances. It was understood that the participants' close friends and some family members were influential in their drift to crime related to substance use and subsequent theft. This situation is consistent with the literature.

Friendship and peer groups are one of the most important factors affecting children after the family environment in the development of children. Friendship relationships affect the child's world as well as one of the determining factors in their delinquency (Socia et al., 2020). When the family does not fulfil the necessary supervision, control and guidance duties regarding the child as it should be, or as the attachment to the family decreases, as the child moves away from the family, the family is replaced by friends and peer groups, and friendship ties develop instead of family ties. If the child's friend environment encourages delinquent behaviours, this may cause the child to perceive criminal behaviours as normal. As a matter of fact, Macionnis (2013) stated in the studies conducted on young boys and girls on subjects such as committing crimes and sexual activities, that the presence of friends who encourage crime in the environment of friends drives young people to crime (Lauger, 2014).

Adolescence constitutes a critical period in an individual's life. In this period, the roles of the individual's friends are important, especially in social and emotional development. Peer relationships provide the opportunity to share their problems with the adolescent, to

establish closeness, and approval of their behaviour, and to establish relationships of support and trust (Goldstein et al., 2005; Lansford et al., 2003). For adolescents, the circle of friends can have many positive effects such as social and emotional support and intimacy, as well as negative effects. A significant increase is observed in adapting to the values and behaviours of the peer group and being open to peer influence during adolescence (Muniz et al., 2022). One of the strongest and most consistent predictors of an adolescent's problematic behaviour is the presence of a friend who exhibits such behaviour. Being together with peers who display problematic behaviours causes adolescents to display perverse behaviours in the future (Eyasu et al., 2021). At the same time, young people who show criminal behaviour usually tend to commit crimes together with their friends (Arnett 1992; Goldstein et al. 2005). Adolescents' degree of identification with their friends determines the degree to which they are affected by their friend's behaviour. Thus, peer influence increases with identification. In this process, the level of similarity between peers is also important (Shaw & Johnson, 2022). The similarity of two peers increases the level of influence. For this reason, best friends are more influential than the general friend group. At the same time, as the duration of friendship among adolescents increases, the influence of peers also increases (Sutton & Farrall, 2004). Peer relations are a process that includes children's cognitive, social and affective features that support all developmental areas and whose effects are permanent. In this process, interaction, cooperation and sharing with other children also increase (Hay, Caplan, & Nash, 2008). Peers, in the process of positive peer relations; become information sources, role models and supportive of each other. Thus, they gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours with the help of functions such as sharing, competition, equality and criticism (Guhn et al., 2016; Perren et al., 2007).

In the research, the women stated that their friends were directly influential in their delinquency in childhood, that it was their friend group that drove them to delinquency, and that the reason for their being in prison at the moment was family and friends. When children are with their peers away from the control of adults, they gain the necessary knowledge and skills by experiencing how to establish relationships on their own, interpersonal relationships, how to deal with problems, and resolve conflicts. In the studies conducted by Macionis (2013) on young boys and girls committing crimes, it has been revealed that young people have friends who encourage negative behaviour in their

friend environment. It has been stated by Rubin et al. (2009) that peer groups, which are described as social structures consisting of groupings, cliques, leaders and followers, are quite abundant during adolescence. The mentioned peer groups are established according to the similarity of behaviours such as gender, academic success, popularity, and aggression (Rezey & Lauritsen, 2022; Sutton & Farral, 2004). Poulin, Dishion, and Haas (1999) reported that 13–14-year-old adolescents who have bad friendships have a higher increase in criminal behaviour than adolescents who have high-quality friendships. According to Caputo and King (2015) and Hendry (1983), adolescents generally focus on their relationships with their friends and peers and acting together with their peers, in addition to positive interactions such as solving problems together, gaining similar hobbies and behaviours, they can also acquire harmful habits like consumption of prohibited substances and cigarettes.

In the research, the women stated that their friends were directly influential in their delinquency in childhood, that it was their friend group that drove them to delinquency, and that the reason for their being in prison at the moment was family and friends. In this study, some participants stated that they were in peer environments that led them to delinquency from a young age, while others stated that they later joined the said environments. All of the participants stated with a clear and definite statement that they were victims of friends and/or peer groups. They stated that they became delinquent because of their influence.

The participants expressed their regrets by talking about the negativity of the peer environment in their childhood. The results obtained in this study are consistent with the results of various studies in the literature (Fay and Diallo, 2015; Houser et al., 2019; Rezey and Lauritsen, 2022; Sosnowski et al., 2020). When the reasons for substance use are examined; in most of the studies, it is seen that the influence of friends and peers in children's lives is at the forefront. In particular, this effect emerges as the strongest risk factor for starting substance use (Eker et al., 2013; Hayatakhsh et al., 2008; Tyler et al., 2016). It is seen that the probability of using addictive substances is high in individuals who are members of a group with a positive attitude towards substance use and who have a high level of commitment to this group (Ögel et al., 2007; Özbay et al., 2017). Factors such as parents, siblings, friends, brief family and environment are strong determinants of children's substance use risk (Walters, 2022). These can directly enable children to

adopt substance use as a normal social behaviour, they may even be individuals who provide this substance to children (Alikaifoğlu, 2005). The fact that children form gangs, stems from the need to feel emotions such as love, approval and compassion that they cannot see in their families and society (Houser et al., 2019). As a result of the relations between gang members, they try to meet such emotional needs. However, the potential of children to be delinquent and commit crimes increases through the gangs they form together. Thus, children may be involved in serious crimes, which can range from drugs, pickpocketing, sexual, theft, extortion, and murder (Silva and Guedes, 2022). Factors such as the people they meet are inclined to commit crimes, the economic inadequacy of the children, their young age, and their lack of family support cause them to be deceived by such individuals and commit crimes (Kubrin et al., 2019). Due to the negative environment that children are in, they may be prone to crime over time, these children, who lack support, establish close relationships with people who do not comply with societal norms, and the fact that they are in contact with the cultures of the criminals play a role in increasing the possibility of committing a crime (Rosenfeld & Vogel, 2021). They are desperate to meet even their very basic needs such as coping with hunger and clinging to life, and they got involved in crime such as theft, pickpocketing, drug use and sale, extortion, injury, extortion, and prostitution, which are illegal (Kızmaz & Bilgin, 2010). Children are affected by other criminals in prison and learn different ways of committing crimes negatively. Thus, crime committed by children increases over time. The delinquency of girls is a multidimensional phenomenon. In this context, various factors such as the low socio-economic level of the family, the low educational level of the parents, the crowded family, and unhealthy parental attitudes can be expressed (Reale et al., 2022; Walters, 2022). Especially during adolescence, girls move away from their families and get closer to their friends and peers (Haines et al., 2021). It is understood that those who use substances in the participants' family or circle of friends encourage the participants to use substances and act as role models. Participants turned to substance use during childhood for two reasons. First; In order to encourage children to steal, it is to accustom them to substance use and to enable them to obtain money through theft to purchase substances. Latter; The reason for being accepted into the friend group is to start using substances. It is a known fact that young people who use substances steal in order to find the money they need to purchase substances. It was understood that the

participants' close friends and some family members were influential in their drift to crime related to substance use and subsequent theft. This situation is consistent with the literature.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

In the research, among qualitative research techniques, a phenomenological research pattern was used to indicate that women who were involved in crime in their childhood were involved due to peer influence. The participants stated their regrets, expressing the negative effects of the family and friend environments on their childhood.

In addition to this, it has been revealed that the family relations of the children and the presence of an individual with a criminal history in the family are also among the risk factors.

In the study, it was revealed that women between the ages of 18-25 were driven to crime by their friends over the age of 18, especially when they were between the ages of 14-16. Considering the characteristics of the period in which children are driven to crime, it has been observed that this tendency is higher in the early and mid-periods of adolescence. The types of crimes that children are dragged into during this period are usually theft and substance use. In addition, situations such as leaving the children born as a result of extra-marital partnerships in adolescence to die are among the types of crimes in childhood. Considering these types of crimes faced by children, it is understood that crime types differ depending on curiosity, social and emotional development, sexual and physical development. In the studies conducted around the world, it is seen that the involvement of children in various crimes, especially substance use, is widespread. This situation may occur in the form of uncontrolled/side effects of scientific and technological developments as well as related to social characteristics. Even though children are not in their immediate surroundings, they tend to commit crimes that are far away thanks to tools such as the internet/social media. Therefore, there are many variables that cause children to be involved in crime. Reducing juvenile delinquency can be possible with the controllability rate of these variables.

In the research, it has been revealed that being driven to crime, in general, occurs with peers and friends. Similar emphases are also made in research on the subject in different cultures and societies. Because in the researches, it is seen that the exposure of children

to criminal behaviors occurs in the family and friends environment and this situation poses a risk for the children. In this respect, the follow-up of peer interactions by parents, especially during the transition to adolescence and during adolescence, may have a reducing effect on delinquency.

One of the factors affecting the delinquency of the women participating in the research is the family. The presence of individuals involved in crime in the family may cause children to recognize criminal behaviours closely and accept these behaviours as normal. In this respect, informative guidance services can be provided to all parents, especially families with criminal experience, about raising children and the variables that affect the tendency to delinquency in children.

The widespread use of the Internet, together with the technological tools that most individuals can access, such as phones, tablets and computers today, may cause individuals especially in adolescence to make friends far or near uncontrollably. Therefore, it is important to provide training on criminal behaviour and protection methods by experts for adolescents and their families.

The women participating in the research stated that they started committing crimes at the age of 7, and a great number of the participants expressed that at the ages of 14-16, they exhibited criminal behaviours and interacted with people having criminal behaviours. These statements are supported by research findings in the literature and conducted in different cultures. This period in which the children are in corresponds to the high school or secondary education level in the education process. So, taking measures in and out of school to protect students who study in high schools from the risk of crime may have a reducing effect on the delinquency of children.

The limitation of this research is that the process of obtaining permission to conduct research with inmates who have committed crimes, are convicted and are still in prison has made it difficult to study. In this process, the identification of the inmates to attend this research has been done by the prison administration due to the characteristics of the inmates and the delicacy of the prison. This case is a crucial boundedness of the research. Since the participants of the research were inmates, the fact that the dialogues were conducted in a room separated with glass is also among the boundedness of the research. Alongside, another boundedness element is that the crime diversity is limited since the

inmates with a specific crime category stay in the same area. Alongside, every participant stated their gratification, uttering that the conversation was good for them, making them feel happy.

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