Young Incarcerated Vietnamese Offenders and the Risk Factors in Their Offending: A Life History Approach

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2017
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics, procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Toan Quang Le
March 03, 2017
Acknowledgements

This thesis has been completed with professional and spiritual support from many people. Without their assistance and encouragement, this dissertation would never have been completed. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere and deepest gratitude to all of them.

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Peer Review Papers

The following papers were written as part of the research for this thesis:


Abstract

Youth offending, also known as juvenile crime, youth crime or juvenile delinquency, involves criminal acts and other illegal behaviour engaged in by minors who are younger than a statutory age limit. Recently in Vietnam, instances of youth offending have become more serious with an increase in the numbers of crimes committed by young people as well as the seriousness of youth offending. Several intervention strategies and programs have been designed and implemented to target youth offending in Vietnam but these appear to have been ineffective. What is suggested here is the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the risk factors behind youth offending specific to that country.

Taking Vietnam as the site of the research, this study investigates the risk factors and their impacts on the likelihood of youth offending. A multi-method approach was employed in this current study. The life history approach was utilised as the primary method of collecting data, which were conducted with thirty young incarcerated male offenders in three selected prisons in the North of Vietnam. Ecological paradigm was subsequently utilised to analyse the correlations between the identified risk factors in contributing to youth offending. Document analysis and interviews with the public officers had also been conducted for a better understanding of the risk factors for youth offending as well as the effectiveness of the prevention of youth offending and the rehabilitation of young offenders.

What emerged from this study is a society in transition, conflicted and inadequate in dealing with young offenders. It found a range of risk factors at work: individual, family, school, peer and other social and community risk factors, which might have had significant impacts on the likelihood of youth offending. In individual terms, the interviewed sample revealed such characteristic as risk-taking, aggression, violent behaviour; hyperactivity, impulsiveness and lack of self-control; substance abuse and involvement in other illegal activities. In terms of family, the relationship between parents and children in the family, child maltreatment, family conflict and inter-parental violence, separation from parents, family disruption and remarriage, inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision, criminal and substance-abused parents and running away from home were the most important family risk factors found in this study. The sample revealed a prevalence of child-rearing methods in contributing to youth offending. These included poor parent-child relationships and a lack of parental involvement in their upbringing, inconsistent discipline, lack of supervision, and child maltreatment.
In the school domain, it was found that school disconnectedness (which included negative attitude to school, academic failure, poor school bonding, truancy, grade retention, dropping out of school and school expulsion) was among the most common school risk factors. Moreover, school violence appeared to be most outstanding and significant risk factors found in this study. Lack of cooperation between school and families and other school management factors had also contributed to increase the risk of youth offending. In terms of peer influence, this current study found a significant role of peer-related risk factors, including adverse impact from delinquent peers and gang affiliation. Many offenders committed their offences in the cooperation with their peers or other gang members, while others blamed their peers for their involvement in criminal activities. The study also found various community risk factors at play, including poverty, technologic influences (internet, game culture), and under-enforcement of alcohol consumption, management of games and the internet, management of firearms and other weapons and handling of crimes and other illegal activities.

From the findings of this study, several implications for more effective youth offending prevention strategies were suggested. Moreover, recommendations for future research in the field of risk factors for youth offending with a larger sample and broader context of research; and the application of life history method in the study of youth offending are also suggested.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asia Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUD</td>
<td>Australian Dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPV</td>
<td>Communist Party of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSO</td>
<td>General Statistics Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSC</td>
<td>Generalized Communicative Suspicion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLISA</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPS</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICF</td>
<td>Participant Information and Consent Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Public Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>People’s Police Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC8</td>
<td>General Department of Executing Criminal Punishment and Justice Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC6</td>
<td>General Department of Crime Prevention and Combating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VND</td>
<td>Vietnam Dong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the research

This thesis is a study of young offenders in the nation state of Vietnam, located on the Indochina Peninsula in South-East Asia. Vietnam has a long land border of 4,550 km, with China to the North, and Laos and Cambodia to the West. Vietnam’s eastern border is the Eastern Sea (South China Sea) of the Pacific Ocean. With a population of over 90 million people (Thanhniennews 2013a; Vietnamnews 2013), Vietnam has one of the largest populations amongst countries in South-East Asia (Vietnamnews 2013). As an Asian country, Vietnam has many points of differentiation with other countries in political, cultural, socio-economic, historical and demographic terms. The essence of Vietnamese society is distinct and therefore in need of specific study to better understand youth offending and the associated risk factors in Vietnam. To that end, an overview of historical, cultural, socio-economic, education, demographic background is deemed necessary to understand the context of youth offending. The understanding of these cultural, political and socio-economic factors may influence young people and their potential involvement in youth offending, as well as assist in the prevention of youth offending in Vietnam.

1.1.1 Historical and cultural background

It has been claimed that ‘the most important feature of Vietnam’s heritage is its struggles against foreign aggression’ (Engholm 1995, p. 13). Throughout the past 2000 years, the Vietnamese people have been fighting foreign invaders to protect the country. Extended periods of war have had great impacts on Vietnamese development, its cultures and its society. After thousands of years of being dominated by the Chinese, Vietnam was significantly influenced by the ‘Chinese high culture, including legalist bureaucratic techniques and Confucian ethics, art, literature and language’ (McLeod & Nguyen 2001, p. 16). After defeating the Chinese in 1789, the Vietnamese dynasties tried their best to protect their independence but did not abandon Chinese culture. They began the process of bureaucratic centralisation and implementing imperial examinations\(^1\) based on Chinese texts about Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. ‘Most dynasties adopted Chinese-style central

\(^1\) A civil service examination system in Imperial China for selecting candidates for the state bureaucracy.
government, Confucianism and political thought’ (Vo 2005). More recently, when Vietnam was invaded by France (and then by the United States), the influence of Confucianism was lessened as Western culture penetrated Vietnam. Having successfully combatted the Chinese, the French and the United States, the Vietnamese people have shown high levels of pride, patriotism and nationalism. After the unification of the whole country in 1975 and especially the ‘Doi moi’ process starting in 1986, the socio-economic situation of Vietnam has changed significantly and also affected its culture. After becoming a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2007, with its new open-door policy and economic liberalisation, Vietnam has strengthened its relationships with many countries around the world. Therefore, the structure of the Vietnamese cultural system is multi-layered due to its being influenced by many civilizations and traditions, including East Asian Confucianism and, more recently, French and American systems. The cultural influences identified as different, various and even contradictory, have now been unified, to co-exist and create a diversified and multi-patterned Vietnamese culture (Vo 2005).

1.1.2 Religiosity profile

Vietnam is often described as being a Buddhist or Confucian country despite the distinct nature of its communist system. Most of the major religions, including Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam have all gained a foothold and are all still followed in Vietnam (Vo 2005). However, the Vietnamese have rarely accepted new beliefs or practices completely, but ‘adopted and adapted foreign traditions, blending them with indigenous beliefs and with each other’ (McLeod & Nguyen 2001). Nearly 80% of Vietnamese consider themselves Buddhists and every Vietnamese family venerates their ancestors; most families have a family altar for praying as well (Vo 2005). However, the number of people who actually practice Buddhism is of a much lower proportion. Many people usually go to pagodas for praying and in doing that, they think that they are following Buddhism. Nevertheless, according to their identity cards, many people are not affiliated with any religion. According to the results of the Vietnam Population and Housing Census (General Statistics Office 2009), there were over 15.6 million people in Vietnam following a religion (18.23% of the population), including nearly 7 million following Buddhism (7.93%).

2 Doi moi (renovation) is the name of an economic reform started in Vietnam in 1986 after the 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, with the aim of creating a ‘socialist-oriented market economy’.
Over 5.6 million are Catholic (6.61%) and more than 734 thousand follow Protestantism (0.86%), which makes up 7.47% of those who follow Christianity (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Religious Affiliation (numbers) (Source: General Statistics Office 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The entire country</td>
<td>7,509,832</td>
<td>8,141,635</td>
<td>15,651,467</td>
<td>18.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>3,172,576</td>
<td>3,629,742</td>
<td>6,812,318</td>
<td>7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Catholicism</td>
<td>2,783,619</td>
<td>2,893,167</td>
<td>5,677,086</td>
<td>6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hoa Hao Buddhism</td>
<td>717,191</td>
<td>716,061</td>
<td>1,433,252</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cao Đài (Caodaism)</td>
<td>384,204</td>
<td>423,711</td>
<td>807,915</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Protestantism</td>
<td>354,696</td>
<td>379,472</td>
<td>734,168</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>34,445</td>
<td>37,823</td>
<td>72,268</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brahmanism</td>
<td>27,791</td>
<td>28,636</td>
<td>56,427</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tu An Hieu Nghia</td>
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<td>20,647</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>5,798</td>
<td>11,093</td>
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<td><em>Vietnam Pure Land Buddhist Home-Practice Association</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Buu Son Ky Huong</td>
<td>5,510</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>10,824</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Way of the Strange Fragrance from the Precious Mountain</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this report, the proportion of people who follow a religion was not high, as most Vietnamese people (over 80%) claim not to follow any religion. However, many people still subscribe to the basic beliefs of Buddhism (as mentioned above).

---

3 According to the General Statistics Office, the population of Vietnam at 1 April 2009 was 85,846,997. [https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=577&ItemID=9783]
Figure 1.1: Map of Vietnam by Region
Figure 1.2: Map of Vietnam by Cities/Provinces
1.1.3 Government structures in Vietnam

After the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the south of Vietnam united with the north forming the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, solely led by the Vietnamese Communist Party. This might be significant in the context of this study. A country at war for decades, even centuries, would have had little chance to develop independently without interference. The disruptions and dislocations caused by extensive periods of wars cannot be underestimated when investigating the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.

Vietnam is a one-party state, governed by a centralised system with the highest political control vested in the CPV, headed by the Party Secretary General. The central role of the CPV is acknowledged in Article No. 4 of the Vietnamese Constitution. The highest organ of the CPV is the Politburo, which included 19 members in 2016. These most powerful members of the Party also hold the most important positions in the Government, including offices of the President, Prime Minister and others who have the authority to deal with the most significant social, economic, security, defence and foreign affairs portfolios (Vo 2005). All the political organisations in Vietnam are under the control of the Communist Party, which, through its resolutions and directives, provides strategic direction for every area of the country (Vuong et al. 2012).

According to the Constitution, the National Assembly is the highest representative body of the people and the only organisation with legislative powers. Though it has the power of lawmaking, the National Assembly is still subject to the CPV directives (Vuong et al. 2012) and the president of the National Assembly is also one of the members of the Politburo. Moreover, the armed forces (the army and the police) are still under the direct control of the CPV, which remains the dominant political force (Vo 2005).

While the National Assembly holds the legislative authority, the Vietnamese Government is the executive body, responsible for fulfilling the state duties of political, economic, cultural, societal, defence, security and external relationships. The Government also ensures the efficiency of the State system from the Central Government to the regional governments and enforces the respect for and implementation of the Constitution and the legal codes (Vuong et al. 2012).
1.1.4 Socio-economic background and poverty in Vietnam

After reunification, the Vietnamese government implemented a centrally planned economic policy throughout the whole country. The government also embarked on a campaign of collectivisation of farms and factories, which had serious consequences for the economy, resulting in a severe economic crisis (Vo 2005). The circumstances led to the abandonment of the central planned economic policy and the pursuit of economic reforms by the Vietnamese government. However, the economic reform efforts were not at first, successful. To efficiently respond to the critical economic situation, a remarkable change in government economic policy was implemented, in which the inconsistent conservative ideology was replaced by a more progressive philosophy. This change was reflected in the resolutions adopted by the Sixth Communist Party Congress meeting in 1986, in which the policy of ‘Doi moi’ was formally introduced.

In ‘Doi moi’, free market reforms were implemented, resulting in the transition from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam. The reform focused on calling for the independence of state-owned enterprises in the economy and in finance; price liberalization (moving from centrally-determined prices to market-determined prices); ownership diversification (encouraging the private sector); encouragement of foreign investment; strengthening of both agricultural incentives and institutional support for agriculture; and fundamental reform of the financial system (Vo 2005).

‘Doi moi’ significantly changed Vietnam’s economy, resulting in rapid improvements in agriculture, construction and housing, industrial production, exportation and investment in Vietnam from other countries. Vietnam became a member of the WTO in 2007, which has provided a legal framework to increase trade between Vietnam and other countries all over the world.

Vietnam is a development success story in transforming an economy. Political and economic reforms have transformed the country from one of the poorest countries in the world to a country of lower middle-income status within 20 years. The per capita income increased from around US$100 in 1986 to over US$2,000 by the end of 2014 (World Bank 2015). The average growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Vietnam had reached 6.4% per year by the 2000s, but it has since slowed because of the global financial and economic crisis. However, despite a high rate of inflation, the economy then regained its position to stabilise
at 6.8% per year by 2010 (General Statistics Office cited in HN Nguyen 2015). Though the GDP had declined in some periods after 2010, it significantly increased again to 6.3% per year during the first half of 2015. Vietnam had successfully improved its macroeconomic stability (World Bank2015).

However, Vietnam’s economic development has not encompassed other social issues, resulting in a number of challenges in various areas of the country. These include increasing income and social inequality, the changing structure of the labour force, the significant gaps between rich and poor and between the Kinh majority ethnic group and other minority ethnic groups (World Bank2015). The phenomenon of urbanisation which resulted in migration from rural to urban areas was also a significant social issue, resulting in instability.

1.1.4.1 Poverty

Poverty is a state of deprivation with multiple dimensions, including limitations on the opportunity to earn a living income, a lack of assets to protect consumption when in difficulty, a sense of humiliation and a lack of respect from others (World Bank cited in HN Nguyen 2015). HN Nguyen (2015) argues that economic development, resulting from the processes of industrialisation and modernisation, has increased the gaps between rich and the poor and between the majority ethnic group (Kinh) and other ethnic minorities in Vietnam. The levels of poverty in Vietnam from 2010 to 2015 are presented in the following Table 1.2.

In general, there was a decrease in the proportion of the population in a state of poverty in Vietnam, from 14.2% in 2010 to 7.0% in 2015. Similarly, this proportion also declined in every region of the country during this period. The lowest proportion of poverty was located in the South East region with only 2.3% and 0.7% respectively, in 2010 and 2015, while the most severe instances of poverty were to be found in the Midlands and Northern Mountains area, with 29.4% in 2010 and 16.0% in 2015, though these proportions are declining.
### Table 1.2: Poverty Proportions\(^4\) for Vietnam and Its Regions (% of total population)
(Source: General Statistics Office 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole country</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River Delta</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands and Northern Mountains</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern and Coastal Central</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong River Delta</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, according to a report from the General Statistics Office in 2012, in a period of about 20 years from 1993 to 2012, there had been a significant drop in the overall poverty rate from 58.1% in 1993 to 17.2% in 2012. However, the rural and ethnic minority communities were emerging from poverty much more slowly than the urban areas, and these rural and ethnic minority areas remained the poorest with very high rates of poverty in 2012, such as the North West (58%), North East (33.5%) and Central Highlands (29.7%). In 2012, the poverty rates amongst the ethnic minority were still very high at 59.2% (though it had dropped by 27.2% in comparison with 1993) compared to just 9.9% amongst the Kinh people. These issues are clearly shown in Table 1.3.

Although the poverty rate in rural areas has decreased significantly, the number of people in the countryside living in poverty was still much higher than those living in urban areas. For instance, the data from the GSO in 2012 showed that the poverty rate in rural areas (22.1%) was slightly more than four times that of urban areas (5.4%).

\(^4\) Poverty rate is calculated by monthly average income per capita for households according to the Government’s poverty line
Table 1.3: Poverty in Vietnam – Headcount Proportion\(^5\) (% of total population)
(Source: General Statistics Office 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban – Rural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River Delta</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Coast</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Coast</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong River Delta</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinh, Chinese(^6)</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only was the rate of poverty in urban areas much lower than that of rural areas, but the living standards in these regions were also very different. These differences are shown in Table 1.4.

---

\(^5\) The proportion of people living under the poverty standard.

\(^6\) The development, income and poverty rates of those of Chinese ethnicity are relatively close to those of Kinh ethnicity; so they are combined in one group in this report.
1.1.4.2 Income per capita

Table 1.4: Monthly Income per Capita (Source: General Statistics Office 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole country</td>
<td>356.1</td>
<td>484.4</td>
<td>636.5</td>
<td>995.2</td>
<td>1,387.1</td>
<td>1,999.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban – Rural areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>622.1</td>
<td>815.4</td>
<td>1,058.4</td>
<td>1,605.2</td>
<td>2,129.5</td>
<td>2,989.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>275.1</td>
<td>378.1</td>
<td>505.7</td>
<td>762.2</td>
<td>1,070.4</td>
<td>1,579.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River Delta</td>
<td>353.1</td>
<td>488.2</td>
<td>653.3</td>
<td>1,048.5</td>
<td>1,567.8</td>
<td>2,337.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>268.8</td>
<td>379.9</td>
<td>511.2</td>
<td>768.0</td>
<td>1,054.8</td>
<td>1,482.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>197.0</td>
<td>265.7</td>
<td>372.5</td>
<td>549.6</td>
<td>740.9</td>
<td>998.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Coast</td>
<td>235.4</td>
<td>317.1</td>
<td>418.3</td>
<td>641.1</td>
<td>902.8</td>
<td>1,344.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Coast</td>
<td>305.8</td>
<td>414.9</td>
<td>550.7</td>
<td>843.3</td>
<td>1,162.1</td>
<td>1,698.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>244.0</td>
<td>390.2</td>
<td>522.4</td>
<td>794.6</td>
<td>1,087.9</td>
<td>1,643.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>619.7</td>
<td>833.0</td>
<td>1,064.7</td>
<td>1,649.2</td>
<td>2,165.0</td>
<td>3,016.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong River Delta</td>
<td>371.3</td>
<td>471.1</td>
<td>627.6</td>
<td>939.9</td>
<td>1,247.2</td>
<td>1,796.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit: 1,000 VND

In the eleven years from 2002 to 2012, the overall monthly income per capita had increased by a multiple of 5.6 times from VND356.1 thousand to VND1,999.8 thousand. However, the increase in monthly income varied between rural and urban areas, as well as between different regions. Though there was a significant improvement in the income per capita in all parts of the country, poverty gaps between rural and urban areas were still very high. Monthly earnings in rural areas were just over half that of urban areas. Those who lived in the mountain regions and the ethnic minority areas also encountered critical issues with low income. For instance, in the North West region, a rural mountainous area with a high proportion of people from ethnic minorities, the monthly income per capita in 2012 was just under VND1 million (about AU$60 ). This was less than half the average monthly income nation-wide and just equal to one-third of the monthly earnings in the South East region. The bulk of the ethnic minorities live in remote areas, thus geographically and culturally isolated and short of favourable conditions for developing infrastructure and basic social services (Vietnamese Government 2003).

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7 AU$1 ~ VND16,499 (exchange rate in January 2017 – Vietcombank.com.vn)
1.1.5 Education profile

Previous studies have identified numerous risk factors related to school and education, which might have affected the likelihood of youth offending (Haines & Case 2005; Hinshaw 1992; Williamson, Ashby & Webber 2005). An education profile is therefore deemed instructive to get a sense about its relevance in the risk factor paradigm.

1.1.5.1 Vietnam literacy rate

A comparison of literacy rates in the urban and rural areas, and for the entire country from 2002 to 2008, is presented in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5: Percentage of literate population aged 10 years and over (Source: General Statistics Office 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The whole country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the literacy rate in Vietnam was high and stable, being just above 92% for the years shown. Moreover, this rate increased year by year, even when the rate of growth was not high. However, the literacy rate in the urban areas is greater than in the rural area, while males are likely to be more literate than females.
Table 1.6: Literacy Rate of Population Aged 15 years and above, 2014 (in percentages)
(Source: General Statistics Office 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic region</th>
<th>Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Midlands and Mountains</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River Delta</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>99.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North and South Central Coast</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong River Delta</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entire country</strong></td>
<td><strong>94.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among those aged 15 years and over, Table 1.6 also shows a higher urban literacy rate compared to that of the rural areas. However, it is important to note that nearly two-thirds of total Vietnamese population (66.02%) lived in rural areas compared to just 33.08% living in urban areas. This might have significantly affected the difference between literacy rates in rural and urban areas. The literacy rate and the differentials between urban and rural literacy rates also varied across regions. The highest rate of literacy was found in the most developed regions in Vietnam, including the Red River Delta and South-East regions. Conversely, the lowest rate was recorded in the areas with socio-economic difficulties, such as Northern Midlands and Mountains, with only 89% literacy rate, given that 83% of the population in this region lived in rural areas. Differences between urban and rural literacy rates in the Northern Midland and Mountains and Central Highlands were also very high. This suggests a high level of inequality between urban and rural areas in the regions, reflecting difficult socio-economic conditions.

1.1.5.2 Rates of school attendance in Vietnam

In general, the rates of school attendance in Vietnam decreased in the transition from primary to lower secondary school and the lowest rates were recorded in the transition to upper
secondary school. The rates of school attendance in urban areas are significantly higher than in the countryside for all levels of education. These rates also rose in every part of the country from 2006 to 2012, as shown in Table 1.7.

Table 1.7: Net School Attendance Rate (in percentages) (Source: General Statistics Office 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Lower secondary</th>
<th>Upper secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban-Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rate of primary school attendance rose from just over 89% in 2006 to over 92% in 2012 in both the urban and rural areas. Moreover, the rates of school attendance were not very different between urban and rural areas in 2012 (92.6% compared to 92.4%). While the gap between lower secondary school attendance between urban and rural areas was not significant, there was a large gap of almost 15% in 2014 between upper secondary school attendance in urban and rural areas. In the six years from 2006 to 2012, this gap narrowed by slightly by just over 1%.

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8 School attendance rate is the proportion of children actually going to school in comparison with all eligible school-age children.
Table 1.8: Educational Profiles of Vietnamese Population, 2014 (Source: General Statistics Office 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic region</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Never Attended school (%)</th>
<th>Incomplete primary school (%)</th>
<th>Completed primary school (%)</th>
<th>Completed lower secondary school (%)</th>
<th>Completed upper secondary school and higher (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire country</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Midlands and Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River Delta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North and South Central Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong River Delta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.8 shows the variations in educational attainment among the different socio-economic regions of the country. The highest proportions of the population who had ‘completed upper secondary and higher’ level belonged to the Red River Delta (35.7%) and the South East region (31.2%), while the lowest levels were recorded in the Central Highlands (17.3%) and the Mekong River Delta (13.0%). Moreover, the populations with less than primary level education (‘never attended’ and ‘incomplete primary’) in the Central Highlands and the Mekong River Delta were also the highest in Vietnam, which accounted for 31.1% and 36.8% respectively. This was consistent with the low literacy rates in these areas, as discussed in the previous section.

This data could be explained by the poor economic conditions of the Central Highlands and the Mekong River Delta while the Red River Delta and the South East are the two regions.
with the highest level of economic development. Therefore, many qualified workers come to live and work in the Red River Delta and the South East regions, thus increasing the overall education level in these areas (General Statistics Office 2014).

1.1.6 Internal migration in Vietnam

Migration is defined as a change in the place of residence of individuals from one territorial unit to another during a given period. There are many reasons for migration: the search for better job opportunities, seeking greater sources of income, to live in a more advantaged environment or to live near friends or relatives. There are also those who are forced to migrate due to natural disasters or wars (General Statistics Office 2014).

HN Nguyen (2015) notes that industrialisation and the urbanisation process had increased the number of internal migrants in Vietnam, most of whom were children and of working age, moving from rural areas to urban areas. More significantly, it is difficult for migrants to obtain long-term residential registration. They therefore encounter numerous difficulties in finding stable jobs to secure their living, as well as obtaining other social services (HN Nguyen 2015).

In Vietnam, data from the censuses of 1999 and 2009 and the 2014 inter-censal survey on population and housing showed that inter-provincial and rural-to-urban migration accounted for a high proportion of migrants though there was a recent decrease in the number of migrating people.

The General Statistics Office (2014), which conducts the Intercensal Population and Housing survey, lists four types of migration:

- Intra-district migration (migrating within the administrative boundaries of a district-level);
- Inter-district migration (migrating between districts within one province);
- Inter-provincial migration (migrating from one province to another);
- Inter-regional migration (migrating between socio-economic regions).

9 The registration for residency is regulated by the Residential Law 2006, which states that citizens must register with the local authorities to be granted permanent residence and obtain a family record book. To do that, they need a legitimate place of accommodation.
According to this survey, the first three types are independent and exclusive, as an individual can only be categorised in one of these three migrant groups. However, an inter-provincial migrant status may also be an inter-regional migration one in cases where the original province and destination are in different regions.

Among the four types of migration, it was found that the number of inter-provincial migrants was the highest, followed by inter-regional migrants while the proportion of intra-district migration was the lowest. Data also indicated that for all migration types, the level of migration during 1994–1999 was lower than at other times. In the period 1999–2004, the rate of migration was subject to marked fluctuations before increasing sharply during 2004–2009, before falling considerably in the period to 2014.

It was clear that there was a strong correlation between economic development and migration within the rate of migration fluctuating according to different economic circumstances. During the period 2004–2009, all types of migration increased while there was a significant increase in industrial and processing zones in various areas and locations throughout the country (General Statistics Office 2014). These production facilities required skilled workers. Furthermore, there was an increase of people moving to the urban areas to seek better employment during this period. These were the reasons for the increase in migration throughout the country during this time. However, Vietnam’s economy then suffered a critical tightening during 2009–2014, which resulted in a drop in the migration rate.

In 2014, Table 1.9 reveals there were over 5.6 million migrants aged five years and over, which accounted for 6.8% of the overall population in Vietnam aged 5 years and over. There was a majority of female migrants nationwide (3,339,400 people), accounting for 59.0% of the total. As well, there was a concentration of migrants in the rural areas, with 3,353,500 migrants (59.2%). Nonetheless, the most economically developed regions, including the Red River Delta and the South East, witnessed the highest rates of in-migration, which again reflected a strong correlation between migration and economic development.
### Table 1.9: Number and Distribution of Intra-country Migrants Aged 5 Years and over, 2014 (Source: General Statistics Office 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence, Socio-economic region</th>
<th>Migrants aged 5 and over (Thousand persons)</th>
<th>Proportion (%)</th>
<th>Proportion of migrants in total population aged 5 and over (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire country</td>
<td>5 668.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3 353.5</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2 315.3</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Midlands and Mountains</td>
<td>437.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River Delta</td>
<td>1 044.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North and South Central Coast</td>
<td>909.7</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>260.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>2 342.4</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong River Delta</td>
<td>674.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.1.7 Juvenile justice in Vietnam

Vietnam was the first country in Asia, and the second in the world, to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), after signing it without any reservations in 1990. In 2011, Vietnam also ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC involving Children in Armed Conflict; and the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography. In Vietnam, though remarkable achievements were recorded in the promotion of children’s development, there are still numerous problems related to Vietnamese children, including children’s involvement in criminal proceedings. TTN Pham (2013) argued that Vietnam had not fulfilled its responsibilities as a signatory to the CRC, as numerous children are still participating in the judicial procedures as offenders, victims and witnesses without being supported as contemplated in the CRC.

In Vietnam, an individual will be prosecuted and punished only when they have reached 14 years of age at the time of committing the crime, while administrative measures could be
applied for those aged 12 to 18 years. However, the punishment regime for juvenile offenders in Vietnam is also different from that of the adult offenders, in as much as the juvenile offenders serve lighter punishments in comparison with an adult committing same criminal act. This has been the official policy of the Vietnamese government with juvenile offenders, with the intention to rehabilitate them into mainstream society. This point is noted in Article 69 of the Penal Code:

The handling of young offenders aims mainly to educate and help them redress their wrongs; develop healthily and become useful citizens of society.

In all cases of investigation, prosecution and adjudication of criminal acts committed by juveniles, the competent State agencies shall have to determine their capability of being aware of the danger to society that they pose in light of their crimes and the causes and conditions relating to such offences.

Juvenile offenders may be exempt from penal liability if they commit less serious crimes or serious crimes, which cause no significant harm and involve many extenuating circumstances and they are arranged for supervision and education by their families, agencies or organizations.

(Penal Code of The Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1999, Article 69)

According to the Vietnamese Penal Code, persons aged 14 years or older, but below 16 years of age, are held to be responsible for severe crimes intentionally committed and for extremely serious crimes. Those aged a full 16 years or older bear criminal responsibility for all crimes they commit (Penal Code 1999, Article 12). This is shown in Table 1.10.

However, the Penal Code provides that the punishment applied to juvenile offenders is always lighter than that for adult offenders. Juvenile offenders may not be prosecuted when they commit less serious and serious crimes if they are less than 16 years old, as shown in Table 1.10. Even if they have committed very serious offences without intent (e.g. manslaughter), those who are under 16 years old will not be punished at all. Furthermore, the highest sentences applied to the juvenile offenders are also lighter than that for adult offenders, as shown in Table 1.11.
Table 1.10: Age of Criminal Responsibility in Vietnam (Source: Penal Code 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Less serious(^{10})</th>
<th>Serious</th>
<th>Very serious</th>
<th>Extremely serious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 14</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 – less than 16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes (if intentionally commit the crime)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 and above</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the Penal Code provides that the punishment applied to juvenile offenders is always lighter than that for adult offenders. Juvenile offenders may not be prosecuted when they commit less serious and serious crimes if they are less than 16 years old, as shown in Table 1.10. Even if they have committed very serious offences without requisite intent (e.g. manslaughter), those who are under 16 years old will not be punished at all. Furthermore, the highest sentences applied to the juvenile offenders are also lighter than that for adult offenders, as shown in Table 1.11.

From Table 1.11, those who are aged under 12 years will not be punished or processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling\(^{11}\). Those aged 12 years and over may be administratively handled due to their activities. Juveniles aged from 14 to under 18 years old may be punished for their crimes, but the punishment is different for the various age groups (e.g. 14–15, 16–17, and 18 and over).

The highest sentence applied for a young offender from 14 to under 16 years old is no more than 12 years’ imprisonment regardless of how serious the consequences of the crime committed. Those offenders who are aged from 16 to less than 18 years when committing offences will not receive more than 18 year of incarceration, while the highest sentence applied to an adult (over 18 years) may be up to life sentence, or capital punishment, which is still legal in Vietnam.

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\(^{10}\) This is regulated in Article 9 of the Penal Code, which is measured by the consequence of a crime act and the highest punishment applied for that crime.

\(^{11}\) This type of handling is regulated by the Law of Administrative Violation Handling (2012). It is used in place of prosecution and incarceration in those cases, in which the participants are not old enough to be prosecuted, or their activities were insufficiently serious as to warrant prosecution.
Table 1.11: Handling of young offenders in Vietnam (Source: Penal Code 1999; Law of Administrative Violation Handling 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>12 years of incarceration</th>
<th>18 years of incarceration</th>
<th>Life incarceration or capital punishment</th>
<th>Educating in the community</th>
<th>Sending to a reform school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – less than 14</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 – less than 16</td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – less than 18</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 and above</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Vietnam, all crimes and criminal penalties are prescribed in the Penal Code (Article 2). Moreover, there is no separate prison system for young offenders in Vietnam. This leads to a situation where juvenile and adult prisoners are incarcerated in the same prisons. Though there are regulations that prohibit the detention of minors with adult offenders in Vietnam, with the juvenile prisoners being incarcerated in a separate area, the infrastructure for incarceration and detention of both juveniles and adult offenders are essentially the same. This situation is serious, as it has the potential to significantly affect the juvenile offenders and their rehabilitation process.

In addition, the procedure for the settlement of criminal cases must follow the regulations of the Criminal Procedure Code. Therefore, the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code together create the fundamental legal basis for handling crimes, as well as ensuring the offender’s human rights in the criminal procedure, including the rights of juvenile offenders (TTN Pham 2013). However, though each Code has its own chapter about dealing with juvenile offenders, there are few differences in the regulation of adult and juvenile offenders, excepting the following regulations:

- The minimum age of criminal responsibility is 14 years old (Penal Code, Article 12);

- The offender’s family must be notified as soon as the arrest or detention of juveniles takes effect (Criminal Procedure Code, Articles 6 and 303);
• Juvenile offenders are forbidden to be kept together with adult offenders\(^{12}\) (Criminal Procedure Code, Article 308; Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments, Article 27);

• Families and related organisational representatives are compulsorily required to be present while dealing with juvenile offenders (Criminal Procedure Code, Article 305);

• Defence counsel will be provided free of charge in cases of juvenile offending, even if the offenders and their representatives do not request it (Criminal Procedure Code, Article 305);

• At least one juror who is a teacher or a member of youth union should be included in the jury panel for hearing juvenile offenders (Criminal Procedure Code, Article 307);

• Sentences imposed on young offenders are lighter than those imposed on adult offenders for the corresponding crime (Penal Code, Articles 69, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76 and 77);

• A life sentence and capital punishment are not applied to juvenile offenders (Penal Code, Articles 35 and 69). (TTN Pham 2013).

Despite these provisions, Vietnam’s laws and mechanisms for dealing with children in conflict with the law\(^{13}\) still have serious shortcomings, which may influence the effectiveness of juvenile crime prevention and handling (TTN Pham 2013). For instance, there is still no separate juvenile justice system, no juvenile court and no separate prison for young offenders in Vietnam.

1.1.8 Overview of youth offending and prevention in Vietnam

1.1.8.1 Youth offending in Vietnam

Youth offending, also known as juvenile crime, youth crime or juvenile delinquency, is criminal acts and other illegal behaviour engaged in by minors who are younger than

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\(^{12}\) Juvenile offenders in Vietnam are incarcerated in the same prison with adult prisoners, but they are not allowed to be in the same area. When a juvenile offender is sent to a prison, he will be incarcerated in a separate area reserved for juvenile prisoners. However, once reaching 18 years old, the offender will be transferred to the adult area in the same prison.

\(^{13}\) In Vietnam, children in conflict with the law are those aged from 12 to 18 who have violated the law, either administrative or criminal.
a statutory age limit, most commonly 17 years of age (Siegel & Welsh 2010). In Vietnam, this age limit is 18 years of age.

The seriousness of youth offending in Western countries has increased dramatically and youth offending has become a significant threat to public safety. In 1985, Alfred Regnery – the administrator of the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – described juvenile offenders as ‘criminals who happen to be young, not children who happen to commit crimes’ (Regnery quoted by Matsuda 2009). Statistical data shows that the proportion of youth offending rose in almost every part of the world during the 1990s. Since 1995, the rate of youth offending in many Eastern European countries has increased by more than 30% and many of the criminal offences committed by young people are linked to drug and alcohol abuse (United Nations 2004).

Florida Republican Representative Bill McCollum (cited by Lacayo & Donnelly 1997) states that young criminals pose the greatest threat to public safety in America. The incidence of youth offending is not only of concern in several countries, but it seems to be a ‘worldwide phenomenon in industrialised nations’ (Redding, Goldstein & Heilbrun 2005, p. 4). Several researchers have pointed out that a storm of youth violence (Welch, Fenwick & Roberts 1997, p. 484) and a wave of ‘super-predators’ (Dilulio 1995) are coming. More recently, other researchers also concluded that ‘youth offending and other anti-social behaviours are a great concern in contemporary society’ (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005, p. 3).

With a population of over 90 million people (Thanhniennews 2013a; Vietnamnews 2013), Vietnam is one of the most populated countries in South-East Asia (Vietnamnews 2013). A large population is an advantage for Vietnam, but economic development – and the necessity of improving the quality of life – has placed considerable pressure on the Vietnamese government. Vietnam is facing many issues arising from demographic pressures, including the economy, environment, education, health, unemployment and crime – especially youth offending.

In recent times in Vietnam, instances of youth offending have become more common and severe. Widespread instances of serious and violent offences such as murder, robbery and rape have been committed by young offenders. Worryingly, there was a dramatic increase in the seriousness of youth offending, when it was more common that the young offenders committed serious offences, such as murder, rape and robbery (Ministry of Public Security...
According to a report by the Ministry of Public Security (Thanhniennnews 2013b), there has been an increase in crimes committed by young people. Moreover, the alarming increase in youth offending by younger aged offenders has become of serious concern for society with an average of about 10,000 youth offending cases committed by 15,000 young offenders every year. There were about sixty murders and over 200 robbery cases committed by juvenile offenders in the first six months of 2010 (Ngo 2010).

According to the General Department of Criminal Investigation and Crime Prevention – Ministry of Public Security (2012), there were 49,235 cases of juvenile delinquency during the period from 2006 to 2010, which accounts for 20% of all criminal cases nationwide. During this time, there were 75,594 juvenile offenders including 72,964 male (96.4%) and 2,720 female offenders (3.6%). The most common age group of young offenders was from 16 to 18 years old, accounting for 67.1% of all juvenile offenders. Most of the offenders had left school and lived away from their family (40.9%), forming groups of delinquents and committing crimes. The rate of youth recidivism was still high with 44.8% of young offenders being repeat offenders.

Another report of the General Department of Criminal Investigation and Crime Prevention (TC6) in the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) Vietnam (2011) pointed out, that in 2011 there were 8,589 cases with 13,600 young offenders in Vietnam, including 13,062 male (96.1%) and 538 female offenders (3.9%). Among these, 8,644 offenders were aged from 16 to 18 (63%) and 44% of the offenders had left school. Serious violent crimes committed by juveniles, including robbery and murder, increased. School violence rose dramatically as well.

A conference was co-organised by the Institute for Legal Research in the Ministry of Justice and various international organizations in October 2010 to find solutions for preventing juveniles from violating laws and committing crimes in Vietnam. Reports presented at the conference concluded that the number of young offenders in Vietnam had increased and that the offences the young people committed had become more severe and serious than before. More than 30% of the delinquents had left school before they committed crimes for the first time and the recidivism rate was much higher than the international rate, with around 35% of young offenders committing crimes again after they had been apprehended and punished (Thai 2009). It appears that the prevention and rehabilitation programs for youth offending had not been effective in preventing youth re-offending and youth recidivism.
Given their status as official reports, the statistical limitations about the situation of youth offending should be noted. Norris et al. (2010) state that official crime statistics are invariably an underestimation of the real status of crimes due to under-reporting. The actual rate of youth offending should be estimated to be higher because of the ‘dark figure’\(^{14}\) of crime (as mentioned by Coleman & Moynihan 1996; MacDonald 2002; Skogan 1977), which refers to unrevealed and unreported youth offending. Further investigation is required regarding the complexity of youth offending in Vietnam to better identify the risk factors involved, as well as to formulate more effective intervention, prevention and rehabilitation strategies and programs.

1.1.8.2 Youth offending prevention in Vietnam

In Vietnam, there is no separate prevention strategy for youth crimes. Moreover, a lack of focus on the prevention of youth offending is also recorded. Cox (2010) argues that the current Vietnamese youth justice system and associated policy have mainly concentrated on the prosecution of young offenders rather than the prevention of youth offending (cited in HN Nguyen 2015, p. 31). The only project targeting juvenile offending was introduced in 1998, in the National Crime Prevention Program. In 1998, the Vietnamese government issued the Resolution No. 09/1998/NQ-CP on enhancing the effectiveness of crime prevention and combat in the new situation. Together with this resolution, the National Crime Prevention Program was introduced, including four projects. In this program, the fourth project, which targeted combating child abuse and crimes committed by young people, is the most important framework for youth crime prevention. No other legal document focusing on preventing youth offending has been recorded in Vietnam (HN Nguyen 2015)

In the Project No. 04, the main emphasis was on law enforcement preventative measures and the prosecutorial approach to youth offending. Such approach has resulted in the focus on enhancing the role of the police force and their activities in dealing with youth crimes. HN Nguyen (2015) argued that such an approach only focused on dealing with young offenders rather than attempting to identify the risk factors that might increase the likelihood of youth involvement in offending. This is consistent with the conclusions of TTN Pham (2013) that the prevention programs usually focus on the young people when they are about to commit offences, or have already breached the law, rather than actively addressing the risk factors for their offending in the first place. HN Nguyen (2015) concluded that there was a gap between

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\(^{14}\) This refers to the crimes that are not detected and investigated.
policy and practice of youth offending prevention in Vietnam, resulting in a lack of preventive mechanisms.

1.1.9 Statement of problems in the thesis

The Vietnamese Government has tried to identify the significant causes of youth offending to design more efficient prevention programs to control and reduce the rate of youth offending. Despite some focused intervention programs being implemented, the youth offending rate in Vietnam has still increased in not only the number of cases and offenders but also in the seriousness of the crimes committed. Several rehabilitation models have been implemented in other parts of the country to improve the situation of youth offending in Vietnam, including increasing the interactions between families with high-risk children and improving the role and involvement of parents with the juvenile delinquents. However, these programs have not proven to be effective (Thai 2009).

As Siegel and Welsh (2010) note, an empirically based understanding of the causes of youth offending is significant for formulating intervention programs. However, it is important to note that it was difficult to identify the main cause of youth offending, but only the risk factors behind it. To successfully intervene and prevent youth offending, it is crucial to identify the risk factors that may increase the likelihood of youth offending, so as to design effective intervention and prevention programs. It has been concluded that there is no single cause of youth offending and the existence of different risk factors usually leads to an increase in the opportunities for youth offending (Shader 2001). Recently, an approach for medicine and public health, which Farrington (2000) calls the ‘risk factor paradigm’, was imported into the juvenile justice sector. The main purpose of this paradigm when applied to the research of youth offending is to identify the most significant risk factors for youth offending and design the appropriate prevention programs to neutralise these risk factors (Farrington 2000). In other words, it is essential to investigate the risk factors, which may increase the likelihood of later offending among youth (Kazdin et al. 1997). Shader (2001, p. 1) notes that risk factors influence not only serious and violent youth offending but all levels of delinquency as well.

Previous studies (e.g. Shader 2001) have suggested that the risk factors increasing the likelihood of an individual suffering harm and engaging in later offending are various, and can be found in many domains. In recent studies of risk factors for youth offending, these
factors are usually grouped into five domains (or levels): individual factors, family factors, peer-related factors, school-related factors and community (and neighbourhood) risk factors (Hawkins et al. 2000; Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005; Shader 2001; Wasserman et al. 2003).

However, most of the studies about risk factors for youth offending have been conducted in Western countries (see Arthur 2006; Arthur 2009; Barry 2006; Case & Haines 2009; Farrington 2011; Henggeler & Sheidow 2012; Junger-Tas et al. 2011; Shoemaker 2008; Siegel & Welsh 2010 2011; Vien 2010). Studies of risk factors related to youth offending tend to be less prevalent in Asian countries (Le, Monfared & Stockdale 2005) and large-scale representative data on risk factors in Asia are still limited (Chen & Astor 2010, p. 1389). As an Asian country, Vietnam has many differences in comparison with Western nations. The differences of history, cultural values and political and socio-economic conditions may influence the understanding of risk factors specifically related to youth offending in Vietnam.

Although youth offending has become a serious matter in Vietnam, attracting much attention, few studies in this area have been conducted, especially focused and reliable research. Previous studies about youth offending in Vietnam had briefly mentioned the risk factors for youth offending including individual factors, family factors, school-related factors and peer-related factors (DM Nguyen 2014; TPT Nguyen & Cao 2012; CD Pham 2005). However, these studies may broadly investigate youth offending in general, but the understanding of the risk factors for youth offending has so far not been developed from in-depth or detailed research. Moreover, previous studies about youth offending in Vietnam have not clearly examined the risk factors for youth offending from the point of view of offenders’ life histories. What this study suggests is that a life history methodology will shed light on the risk factors and their impact on youth offending in Vietnam. The life history approach is significant for studying youth offending in Vietnam because it may shed light on the historical, demographic, social and cultural contexts and their impact on youth offending in Vietnam. The findings of this study will be used for suggesting effective programs for youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation in Vietnam.
1.2 Research purpose, objectives and research questions

The main aims of this research are to provide robust analysis and explanations to uncover the risk factors for youth offending and their impacts on the likelihood of youth involvement in offending in Vietnam (based on the offender’s life histories).

To achieve the research aims, the following were specific objectives:

a. Examine the instances of youth offending in Vietnam and the consequences of youth offending on young people and society.

b. Identify the risk factors and their impacts on the likelihood of youth involvement in offending in Vietnam.

c. Assess how these risk factors have been the subject of youth offending prevention in Vietnam.

In achieving these objectives, the primary research question raised in this study is: **What are the risk factors for youth offending and how do they influence young people in causing them to commit offences?**

To address this key research question, three sub-questions are posed, including:

1. What are the risk factors associated with youth offending in terms of (a) Individual factors; (b) Family factors; (c) Peer-related factors; (d) School factors; and (e) Community factors?

2. How do these risk factors affect youth offending in Vietnam as evidenced from the life histories of young offenders?

3. How are the risk factors for youth offending – as identified from the life histories of young offenders – targeted by current intervention and prevention programs?

1.3 Scope and design of the research

As outlined above, previous studies have identified a wide range of risk factors related to youth offending, including individual, family, school, peer and community risk factors. These factors are also investigated in this study to identify their impacts on young people in
Vietnam and their involvement in offending. However, this study differs from previous studies in Vietnam, in adopting an unprecedented life history approach to investigate the risk factors specific to Vietnamese youth offending. Numerous risk factors were identified and the relationship between the risk factors in different domains was also assessed.

Central to the research, the life histories of 30 incarcerated young male offenders were examined. The focus was on identifying the risk factors that might increase the likelihood of their involvement in offending. The extant literature was reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the officers who worked for the governmental departments in the areas related to youth offending prevention and young offender’s rehabilitation to supplement the understanding of the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. The findings of the research were then used to make appropriate suggestions to improve the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation programs for young offenders in Vietnam.

In terms of the research design, a multi-qualitative methods approach was utilised in this study. Methods included document analysis, life history interview with the incarcerated young male offenders and interviews with relevant public officers. The schematic representation of the research design can be found in Figure 3.1 and will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

1.4 Definition of key concepts used in this thesis

This study focuses on the life histories of a selected sample of young offenders. Particular terms or concepts related to youth and crime have been used. Some of them have similar yet distinct meanings. The following provides clarification of the terms and their usage in this study.

1.4.1 Juvenile, youth and young people

According to Bezuidenhout (2003, p. 7), the concept of youth is hard to define given its various definitions (cited in Maderthaner 2005). In Vietnam, a youth is defined as a person aged from 15 to 30 years (Youth Law 2005) while a juvenile is a person who is under 18 years old (Penal Code 1999). Therefore, in this study, the sample was selected from young male adult prisoners who had committed crimes and been convicted before the age of 18 years. The terms ‘juvenile’, ‘youth’ and ‘young offender’ are used interchangeably.
1.4.2 Juvenile delinquency and youth offending

In the studies of youth, the concepts of crime and delinquency are sometimes used alternatively. However, while crime and offending are related to criminal activities or behaviour forbidden by criminal law, delinquency is ‘a term, loosely used, to refer to any kind of youthful misbehaviour’ (McLaughlin & Muncie 2013, p. 122). Therefore, the term ‘juvenile delinquency’ is broader than ‘youth offending’, which includes waywardness, misbehaviour, antisocial and other activities which create the ‘pre-criminal’ (Maderthaner 2005). Siegel, Welsh, and Senna (2003) defined juvenile delinquency as ‘participation in illegal behaviour by a minor who falls under a statutory age limit.’ However, as this research only focuses on the people who were under the age of 18 years at the time of committing their offences (juveniles involved with criminal activities) and were handled by the criminal justice system (committed crimes and had been prosecuted, sentenced and incarcerated), the meaning of the two concepts are essentially the same in this research.

1.5 Outline of thesis

The thesis is comprised of ten chapters. These are:

Chapter One. Introduction

The introduction has explained the background of the study including Vietnam’s historical, political, cultural, social-economic and demographic features as well as youth offending circumstances and juvenile justice in Vietnam. The research aims, objectives and research question have also been outlined in this chapter. The research design and definition of the key concepts are provided and the contribution of this study to the knowledge and practices of Vietnam are presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Two. Literature review

A review of the literature related to youth, youth offending and the risk factors for youth offending is undertaken in Chapter Two. The risk factors for youth offending that were identified in previous studies are reviewed and presented in this chapter, including individual, family, school, peer and neighbourhood risk factors. The review provides significant knowledge about the risk factors for youth offending and it helped better understand the key issues related to youth offending in Vietnam.
Chapter Three. Research methods and research design

In this chapter, the research design and methods employed in this study, as well as the process of conducting the research, are presented. A qualitative research design is used in this study with a life history approach to investigate the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. Data was collected from the life history interviews with 30 incarcerated young male offenders and the officials in particular departments related to the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of the young offenders. Data was then analysed to understand the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.

Chapter Four. The offender profiles

This chapter provides a brief overview of the characteristics of the offenders who participated in the research, including general information, types of offences and numbers of convictions, age, academic and school status and other social features. The information provided is significant for understanding the circumstances of the participants in this study before investigating their life history. In general, most participants were still young though some of them had been incarcerated for a decade. All were first convicted when they were under eighteen years of age and they had committed various types of offences. Most of the participants had academic and school problems but none of them were illiterate.

Chapter Five. Individual and family risk factors

Individual risk factors (low self-control, risk-taking, aggressive and violent behaviour, low empathy, substance abuse, physical abuse) and family risk factors (low family bonding, lack of parental involvement and parent-child relationships, family conflict, disrupted family and inter-parental violence and criminal and abusive parents or other family members) from the interview sample are presented and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Six. School and peer risk factors

The risk factors related to school, such as low bonding to school, truancy, grade retention, dropping out of school, school expulsion and school violence of those interviewed are discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, the negative influences from delinquent peers, gang membership and delinquent siblings are also examined.
Chapter Seven. Community and neighbourhood risk factors

This chapter discusses other risk factors related to poverty, the adverse effects of the internet and violent games, the availability of drugs and dangerous weapons and other social risk factors and their impacts on the young males involved in this study.

Chapter Eight. Policing and social regulatory mechanisms: the perspectives of the offenders and the public officers

This chapter presents the results from the interviews with the public official staff regarding the risk factors for youth offending, youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of the young offenders. The issues related to policing youth and regulatory mechanisms are discussed based on the combination of data from the life history interviews with the young offenders and the public officers’ perspectives.

Chapter Nine. Discussion

Chapter Nine discusses the identified risk factors, the relationship between them and their impacts on the young people and their involvement in offending. Various risk factors were identified in this study, with seemingly different impacts on the likelihood of youth offending. While the individual factors such as lack of self-control and impulsiveness, lack of empathy, risk-taking and aggressive behaviour seemed to directly influence the offenders in committing their offences, they were only influential at the micro level, with impacts taking place at higher levels. While poverty, the negative influence of technology and lack of policing were identified as macro risk factors according to the ecological model, the relationship between parents and children, involvement with delinquent peers and other school risk factors were at the meso (medium) level. Implications for the prevention of youth offending in Vietnam based on the findings of this study are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Ten. Conclusion

This chapter summarises the main findings of the research regarding the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. As well, the contributions of the study to the knowledge and practice of youth offending prevention in Vietnam are also discussed. Finally, the limitations of the research are acknowledged, while recommendations for future studies in the field of risk factors for youth offending and youth offending prevention in Vietnam are proposed.
Chapter Two
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the relevant literature regarding youth, youth offending and the risk factors for youth offending. These factors are categorised according to five domains, namely, individual, family, school, peer and neighbourhood risk factors. Previous studies in several Western countries had focused on investigating and explaining the risk factors for youth offending. However, this area of study is still limited in Vietnam and this has resulted in a need to particularise the investigation of risk factors related to youth offending.

2.2 Youth and youth studies

2.2.1 What is youth?

Youth is a general term that is used to describe young people. According to Furlong (2013), youth is a socially constructed intermediary period that links childhood and adulthood. As such, youth as a stage of development is unrelated to specific ages. Unlike childhood, adolescence, or adulthood, youth cannot be linked to specific activities, such as working to earn money or having sexual relations.

According to the World Health Organization, adolescence is defined as the period of life between the ages of 10 and 19 years and youth is the period between 15 and 24 years (Haub & Phuong 2003). Similarly, the United Nations defines a youth as a person who is between 15 and 24 years of age and this definition is applied to all statistics of the United Nations, although different chronologies for defining youth in member states are recognised (Furlong 2013). However, Brooker (2014) argued that there was an confusion in defining youth, as no global definition of youth had been introduced (p. 134). Wyn and White (1996) noted that for institutional and policy purposes, youth were generally defined as those from the age of 13 to 25 years, but this category would probably broaden at both ends in the future. In Vietnam, according to Article No. 1 of Youth Law (2005), a youth is defined as a person aged between 16 and 30 years (Youth Law of Vietnam 2005).

In general, the concept of youth is broader than that of adolescence. While adolescence relates to specific developmental phases, beginning with puberty and ending once
physiological and emotional maturity is achieved, youth tends to cover a more extended time span (Furlong 2013). This is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood and most of the physical, psychological and behavioural changes of young people take place during this time (Furlong 2013). ‘While ‘child’ and ‘adult’ are largely neutral terms, ‘youth’ usually evokes emotive and troubling images of uncontrolled freedom, irresponsibility, vulgarity, neglect, deprivation or immaturity’ (Muncie cited in Zwozdiak-Myers 2007, p. 39).

2.2.2 Why do we study youth?

As noted by Furlong (2013), youth is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, from the ‘full dependence of childhood’ to the ‘independence of adulthood’. Therefore, it is significant to study youth in order to understand the development of individuals from childhood to adulthood. Moreover, while Linton (2002) states that ‘who has the youth, has the future’, there are significant problems related to youth (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts 1998; Furlong 2013; Zwozdiak-Myers 2007). Therefore, solving problems related to youth requires a better understanding of youth. Wyn and White (1996, p. 6) concluded in their research about the importance of the study of youth that:

It is important to study youth because the points where young people engage with the institutions that either promote social justice or entrench social division are significant points of reference for every society. Hence, the study of youth is important as an indicator of the real ‘cost’ and ‘benefit’ of the political and economic systems of each society.

The study of youth has attracted researchers from different social science disciplines such as politics, sociology, criminology, psychology, geography and social policy. An increasing number of academics, researchers, practitioner and professionals have chosen youth studies as their main research area for a better understanding of youth and the issues facing youth (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts 1998). Within various areas of research, researchers may prefer investigating events or experiences that are most common to young people, such as leaving school or entering the paid workforce. Others may be interested in exploring general phenomena, such as voting behaviour or unemployment while some researchers may wish to focus on the experiences of young people to understand the issues related to the nature of social changes (Furlong 2013).
2.3 Youth offending

Youth offending, described as criminal behaviour engaged in by minors, has been considered among youth’s greatest problems for decades (Siegel & Welsh 2010). Furlong and Cartmel (cited in Zwozdiak-Myers 2007, p. 39) concluded that there was a strong connection between concepts of youth and risk factors for youth offending. They argued that in modern industrialised countries, youth might experience a wide range of dangers – as well as opportunities related to lifestyle, education and employment – not encountered in previous generations. However, they also noted that ‘there is a tendency to focus on this group as engendering risk, a source of delinquency and deviant subcultures’ (Zwozdiak-Myers 2007, p. 39). A partial explanation for the perceived marginal nature of youth is that they are neither ‘innocent’ children nor real adults with the ‘social maturity’ of adulthood. ‘Belonging to neither of these two supposedly ‘stable’ social groups, they are perceived as offering a potential threat to social order’ (Zwozdiak-Myers 2007, p. 39).

As a consequence, youth offending has become of great concern to society (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005) and is perceived as one of the most critical social problems (Public Safety Canada 2009). In particular, young people involved in multiple serious and repeated criminal activities (who are referred to as chronic juvenile offenders) are considered to constitute a serious social issue (Siegel & Welsh 2010).

According to researchers in the area of youth offending, there is an urgent need for better and more effective intervention and prevention strategies and programs to deal with youth offending (Siegel & Welsh 2010). Hence, youth offending has been an important area of study from the beginning of the twentieth century (Siegel & Welsh 2008). Siegel and Welsh (2010) emphasised that the study of youth offending was significant, not only because of the damage suffered by the victims, but also for the issues faced by the offenders. They noted that the formulation of effective strategies for youth offending intervention requires an empirically-based understanding of the causes of delinquency. Patchin (2006) stated that it was important not only to better identify the risks of early childhood offending, but also to create effective intervention programs to dissuade any potential offending.

In Vietnam in recent years, despite the fact that youth offending has become a serious issue, not many studies in this area have been conducted, especially ones that are focused and of high quality. Previous studies that targeted youth offending in Vietnam had briefly mentioned
several risk factors for youth offending, including individual factors, family factors, school-related factors and peer-related factors (NT Dang 2007; Do 2000; DT Ho 2002; DM Nguyen 2014; TPT Nguyen & Cao 2012; CD Pham 2005). However, although these studies broadly investigated the causes of youth offending, the understanding of the risk factors was neither in-depth nor detailed. Several studies only mentioned specific aspects of youth offending, such as the psychological or social aspects. Furthermore, some of these studies were based on secondary data analysis only (formal reports, criminal case profiles) without in-depth interviews. This may have limited the value of any consequent findings. Another recent study utilising mixed methods had broadly identified several risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam by focusing on the juveniles in the reform schools established for juvenile offenders in Vietnam (see HN Nguyen 2015). The data for that study was mostly generated by surveys with the offenders in the reform schools in Vietnam, so the findings were broader, as the sample for the study was much larger, but might not have been as detailed by comparison with life history research.

2.4 Risk factors for youth offending

In recent years, the field of research into youth offending has attracted much attention from researchers in many countries other than Vietnam, many of whom attempting to investigate and obtain a better understanding of the phenomena behind youth offending (e.g., Arthur 2006; Case & Haines 2009; Farrington 2007 2011; Loeber & Farrington 2011; Maderthaner 2005; Siegel & Welsh 2010 2011). Such research refers to different aspects of youth offending, such as prevention strategies, youth gang involvement, risk and protective factors for youth offending, youth corrections and so on. Nevertheless, most studies focus on investigating the risk factors for youth offending, and for designing intervention and prevention programs to reduce its incidence. However, due to the varying contexts, policy and intervention programs in each country, the situation of Vietnam’s youth offending may differ from that of other nations. Moreover, the analysis of youth offending is further complicated because of international comparative data issues (United Nations 2004). Investigating the risk factors for youth offending in any particular country, as a result, is critical for both generating insights into youth offending and improving the effectiveness of prevention of youth offending specific to that country.

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15 Risk factors and protective factors are usually mentioned together in the studies of crimes and offending prevention. However, as the main aim of this study was to investigate the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam, the protective factors were not focused and mentioned.
The importation of the ‘risk factor paradigm’\textsuperscript{16} from medicine and public health studies into juvenile justice leads to a focus on the factors that increase the possibility of youth involvement in offending (Shader 2001). This approach provides a better understanding of the most significant risk factors for youth offending as well as effective intervention programs to deal with the identified risk factors (Farrington 2000). The study of risk factors is even considered the most crucial and significant approach in understanding and explaining youth offending (Case & Haines 2009).

It is also important to note that the risk factor paradigm, however, has its own problems (Shader 2001). Farrington (2000, p.16) also remarks that the definition and identification of risk factors, the establishment of causes, the interventions based on identified risk factors and the assessment of the effectiveness of interventions are the problems related to the risk factor paradigm. Several other authors also criticised the risk factor paradigm for its limitations (Case & Haines 2009). Case and Haines also pointed out that the risk factor research lacked detailed understanding of the influences of the risk factors on the descriptive, exploratory and explanatory levels. They then concluded that the risk factor paradigm may ‘inappropriately draw inferences from experimental methods’ and, therefore, ‘may be unable to resolve or to answer questions concerning causality or prediction’ (Case & Haines 2009, p.34). However, the purpose of this thesis is studying the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam from the life histories of young offenders, and this is the conceptual framework of the thesis. Therefore, the strengths of this approach were emphasised and highlighted to stress the significance of the risk factor paradigm in this study, while the shortcomings were not focused.

Risk factors are broadly defined as external or internal influences or conditions which are related to or predictive of a negative outcome such as youth offending or antisocial behaviour (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Case and Haines (2009, p. 1) noted that ‘risk factor research also paves the way for preventing future juvenile delinquency’. Farrington (2000) suggested that prevention programs should be designed to counter the identified risk factors. While some risk factors are suggested to be merely correlated with adverse consequences, others are identified as having a causal relation to a negative outcome (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). However, it is difficult to determine whether a risk factor is an indicator or a potential cause of offending (Farrington 2007). It has been proven that focusing on identified

\textsuperscript{16} This paradigm was introduced by Farrington (2000) when he described the movement of risk factors approach into juvenile justice studies.
risk factors for youth offending could make a significant contribution to developing effective intervention and prevention strategies for youth offending (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005).

However, there are also arguments of the effectiveness of the risk factors paradigm.

Previous studies have found a variety of risk factors which could be categorised into several domains, including individual, family, peer, school and community risk factors (see Case & Haines 2009; Farrington & Welsh 2008; Hawkins et al. 2000; Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005; Shader 2001; Vien 2010; Wasserman et al. 2003). For instance, Hawkins et al. (2000) identified and divided the risk factors for youth violence into five domains as shown in Table 2.1. Although this study focused on risk factors as predictors of youth violence, the domains of the risk factors proposed by Hawkins et al. (2000) can be broadly applied to youth offending in general (Vien 2010).
Table 2.1: Domains of Risk Factors in Predicting Youth Violence (Hawkins et al. 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Associated Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Individual**                | Pregnancy complications  
Low resting heart rate  
Internalising disorders  
Hyperactivity, restlessness and risk taking behaviour  
Aggressiveness  
Early onset of violent behaviour  
Involvement in other forms of anti-social behaviour  
Beliefs and attitudes favourable to deviant or anti-social behaviour |
| **Family**                    | Parental criminality  
Child maltreatment  
Poor family management practices  
Low levels of parental involvement  
Poor family bonding  
Family conflict  
Parental attitudes favourable to substance abuse and violence  
Parent-child separation |
| **School**                    | Academic failure  
Low bonding to school  
Truancy and dropping out of school  
Frequent school transitions |
| **Peer-related**              | Delinquent siblings  
Delinquent peers  
Gang membership |
| **Neighbourhood and community** | Poverty  
Community disorganisation  
Availability of drugs and firearms  
Neighbourhood adults involved in crime  
Exposure to violence and racial prejudice |

Shader (2001) focused on risk and protective factors for youth offending as well as the age of onset of antisocial behaviour and categorised these factors into five domains as well which are presented in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2: Domains of Risk and Protective Factors and Age of Onset (Office of the Surgeon General cited in Shader 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Protective factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early onset (ages 6–11 years)</td>
<td>Late onset (ages 12–14 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual domain</td>
<td>• General offences</td>
<td>• General offences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Substance abuse</td>
<td>• Restlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being male</td>
<td>• Difficulty concentrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Aggression</td>
<td>• Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hyperactivity</td>
<td>• Being male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem (anti-social behaviour)</td>
<td>• Physical violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exposure to television violence</td>
<td>• Anti-social attitudes and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Medical, physical problems</td>
<td>• Crimes against the persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low IQ</td>
<td>• Problem (anti-social) behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anti-social attitudes, beliefs</td>
<td>• Low IQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dishonesty</td>
<td>• Substance abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family domain</td>
<td>• Low socio-economic status/poverty</td>
<td>• Poor parent-child relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anti-social parents</td>
<td>• Harsh or lax discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor parent-child relationships</td>
<td>• Poor monitoring and supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Harsh, lax or inconsistent discipline</td>
<td>• Low parental involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Broken home</td>
<td>• Antisocial parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Separation from parents</td>
<td>• Broken home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Abusive parents</td>
<td>• Low socio-economic status/poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Neglect</td>
<td>• Abusive parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other conditions</td>
<td>• Family conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School domain</td>
<td>• Poor attitude and/or performance</td>
<td>• Poor attitude and/or performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer domain</td>
<td>• Weak social ties</td>
<td>• Commitment to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Antisocial peers</td>
<td>• Involvement in conventional activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community domain</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Friends who engage in conventional behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although Shader (2001) went further than Hawkins et al. (2000) in investigating risk factors for youth offending by dividing the risk factors into age groups at the onset of offending, the identified risk factors were consistent with those previously identified by Hawkins et al. (2000). Moreover, when age groups are closely compared, the risk factors in each group are not materially different from other groups. Risk factors, therefore, can be viewed as a continuous exposure process which spans the developmental timeline of a young person (Vien 2010).

More recently, Vien (2010) conducted a literature search of risk and protective factors for youth offending – limited to the studies carried out between 2002 and 2009 on the ISI Web of Knowledge, Social Sciences, Education and Health – to compare the risk factors identified in previous studies. Through this meta-analysis, 26 articles were relevant to risk and protective factors for youth offending. The risk and protective factors identified in the 26 articles were then grouped into the five domains proposed by Hawkins et al. (2000), as shown in Table 2.3.

A considerable body of research has been conducted to explore the impacts of risk factors on delinquency. However, relatively little research has included Chinese and South-East Asian youth and it is unclear if similar findings can be generalised and extended to other ethnic and racial groups such as Asians (Le, Monfared & Stockdale 2005). Moreover, empirical evidence has shown that there are significant differences between Eastern and Western belief systems, perceptions and worldviews (Nisbett 2004). Chen and Astor (2010, p. 1389) have argued that there was almost no evidence to show that findings on risk factors associated with youth offending from Western studies can apply to Asian or other cultures.

Given that this study is a doctoral dissertation utilising a life history methodology, it would be impossible to cover all the above risk factors in their totality. Therefore, only particular risk factors from the domains of individual, family, school, peer and community risk factors identified from the young offenders’ life histories and the interviews with the public officers, were discussed in this study. These factors are presented in Table 2.4 below.
Table 2.3: Identified Risk and Protective Factors for Youth Offending (from the search conducted by Vien 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Individual Domain</th>
<th>Family Domain</th>
<th>School Domain</th>
<th>Peer-related Domain</th>
<th>Community Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk factors</strong></td>
<td>History of aggression</td>
<td>Reported father criminality</td>
<td>Poor school grades</td>
<td>Peer deviance</td>
<td>Lack of social recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early age of first conviction</td>
<td>Running away from home</td>
<td>Instability of school transitions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neighbourhood disorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Late onset of offending</td>
<td>Poor parenting</td>
<td>Teacher-rated anxiousness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Area of residence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>Low parental supervision</td>
<td>School expulsion</td>
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<td>Immigration status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cognitive distortions</td>
<td>Parental neglect/childhood maltreatment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Less mature moral reasoning</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>Large family size</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Witness to domestic violence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Experience of trauma</td>
<td>Grandparent-headed families</td>
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<td>Poor social skills</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Protective factors</strong></td>
<td>Positive response to authority</td>
<td>Good parenting skills</td>
<td>Positive school experience</td>
<td>Positive peers</td>
<td>Attendance at religious services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being withdrawn</td>
<td>High level of family income</td>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Area of residence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td>Good family structure</td>
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<td>Involvement in extracurricular</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intensive treatment programs</td>
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<td>activities</td>
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17 It is argued that individuals who are isolated from delinquent peers are less likely to be affected, so this is considered a protective factor.
Table 2.4: Summary of Risk Factors for Youth Offending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Domain</th>
<th>Family Domain</th>
<th>School Domain</th>
<th>Peer-related Domain</th>
<th>Community Domain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restlessness</td>
<td>Poor family bonding</td>
<td>Academic failure</td>
<td>Delinquent siblings</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration difficulties</td>
<td>Poor parent-child relationships</td>
<td>Low bonding to school</td>
<td>Delinquent peers</td>
<td>Neighbourhood disorganization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk-taking behaviour</td>
<td>Inconsistent discipline</td>
<td>Negative attitude to school</td>
<td>Gang membership</td>
<td>Availability of drugs and firearms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Poor parental supervision</td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>Low level of parental involvement</td>
<td>Dropping out of school</td>
<td></td>
<td>Influence from the internet and games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>Child abuse, maltreatment and neglect</td>
<td>School expulsion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Parental substance abuse</td>
<td>Grade retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of trauma</td>
<td>Criminal parents and siblings</td>
<td>School violence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>General offences</td>
<td>Family conflict</td>
<td>Bullying and victimisation in school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disrupted family, broken home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Witness to domestic violence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Young mother, teenage parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Large family size</td>
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43
2.4.1 Individual risk factors

Like all other types of behaviours, offending may reasonably be assumed to result from the interaction between the individual and environment, though individuals differ in their potential to commit criminal and other related antisocial behaviours (Farrington & Welsh 2008). There is an assumption that individuals have different criminal potentialities and this has been accepted in many countries (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 37).

The continuity of youth offending has been shown in many previous studies, with the contention that individuals who offend at a given age are likely to offend at a later age (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 38). This relates to individual differences in criminal behaviour, necessitating an investigation into individual risk factors to gain a deeper understanding of youth offending.

Most of the research regarding risk factors for youth offending has focused on individual-level factors associated with or predictive of antisocial behaviour including several risk factors in the individual domain. Personality, temperament, low empathy and impulsiveness are among the most significant individual risk factors which are predictive of youth offending (Farrington 2007; Farrington & Welsh 2008). Vien (2010) synthesised previous research and concluded that a history of aggressive behaviour, experience of trauma, mental disorders, other mental health issues and substance abuse were the commonly identified risk factors for youth offending in the individual domain. He also explained that young people with a lack of self-control, concentration problems, risk-taking behaviour, aggression and substance abuse would be less resilient to risk factor exposure and therefore, more likely to be involved in youth offending (Vien 2010).

2.4.1.1 The issue of legal awareness

A review of the extant literature on youth offending in other countries did not show a positive relationship between legal awareness (that is to say, knowledge of whether certain behaviours breach laws and regulations) and youth offending. Hardly any study mentioned legal awareness as a risk factor for youth offending. However, several Vietnamese authors have argued that a lack of legal awareness was common among young offenders in Vietnam and this was among the significant factors for youth involvement in offending (NT Dang 2007 2011b; DT Ho 2002; DM Nguyen 2014). These authors argued that many juvenile offenders lacked basic legal knowledge and several young offenders did not know that they had
committed illegal activities or crimes, even after they were arrested (NT Dang 2007; DT Ho 2002). However, in these studies, the proportion of the offenders who understood the laws related to their crimes was always higher than that of the participants who were not aware of the legal regulations. Therefore, lack of legal awareness need not necessarily be a significant risk factor for youth offending. In support of this argument, DM Nguyen (2014) pointed out that nearly 90% of the offenders well understood their crimes and the punishment they might face. He then raised another significant issue – that of the young person’s attitude toward violence and offending when many of them seemed to ignore the possible legal consequences they might face for committing their crimes. To be more specific, a number of young people understood the laws but still violated the laws and committed their crimes. Therefore, DM Nguyen (2014) argues that it is not the lack of legal awareness, but the ignoring of the laws among young people that was a significant risk factor for youth offending.

2.4.1.2 Lack of self-control

Mathiesen and Prior (2006) have stated that temperament can function as either a risk or a protective factor depending on how it is conceptualised and what circumstances influence an outcome. A particular characteristic of temperament such as negative emotionality can work as a risk factor for conflict and other issues (Mathiesen & Prior 2006). It was also reported that having inadequate self-control (being restless, impulsive, with poor attention) was among the most significant dimensions of child temperament and a strong predictor of aggression, self-reported delinquency and convictions (Caspi cited in Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 47).

2.4.1.3 Hyperactivity and impulsiveness

Hyperactivity and impulsiveness also have significant influence on youth offending. According to Farrington and Welsh (2008), there are numerous constructs which refer to a poor ability to control one’s behaviour. These include impulsiveness, hyperactivity, restlessness, clumsiness, acting without consideration of consequences, lack of ability to plan ahead, low self-control and risk-taking. Many studies show that hyperactivity (restlessness and poor concentration) can act as a predictor of later offending. For example, Brennan, Mednick, and Mednick (1993) found that hyperactivity at ages 11–13 significantly predicted arrests for violence up to age 22 years in the Copenhagen Perinatal project. Similarly, in their study of pregnancy in Brisbane in Australia, Bor, McGee and Fagan (2004) discovered that
children who had problems with attention and restlessness at the age of 5 years had more than twice the risk of offending at the age of 14 years (see Farrington & Welsh 2008).

Impulsiveness which ‘holds a central place in the explanations of adolescent delinquency’ (Vogel & Barton 2013), is one of the most commonly significant personal predictors of offending (Farrington & Welsh 2008; Zimmerman 2010). This factor also reflects the inability to delay gratification, a significant part of self-control. Therefore, several researchers even consider ‘impulsivity and self-control conceptual equivalents’ (White et al. cited in Zimmerman 2010, p. 302). Studies in different disciplines suggest that impulsivity is a strong and stable predictor of various behavioural problems including sexual promiscuity, violence and substance abuse (Vogel & Barton 2013). They further explain that impulsiveness has been demonstrated as a significant risk factor for delinquency and antisocial behaviour among young people (Vogel & Barton 2013, p. 457).

2.4.1.4 Risk-taking and violent and aggressive behaviour

Risk-taking behaviour is also a significant risk factor for youth offending and the relationship between risk-taking and youth offending has been well established in previous studies (Leas & Mellor 2000). On the other hand, offenders normally show a higher level of daring in comparison with those who have not offended (Bui 2014). This conclusion is consistent with the findings from the Cambridge study, in which the most risk-taking boys were more likely to commit offences later in their life. Therefore, it was concluded that risk-taking behaviour was consistently one of the most significant risk factors for youth offending, predicting both official convictions and self-reported offending (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 49).

Violent behaviour and aggression were also significant in predicting youth offending. Rappaport and Thomas (2004) argue that violent behaviours typically develop over an extended period, rather than appearing spontaneously, and a significant continuity of violence has usually existed from childhood into adult life. Huesmann and Moise (1999) also found that peer-nominated aggression at age eight significantly predicted convictions for a crime at the age of 30, as well as the seriousness of the crimes committed (cited in Huesmann, Eron & Dubow 2002). Other studies also confirmed the evolution from childhood aggression to youth offending (Huesmann, Eron & Dubow 2002). This does not necessarily mean that all highly aggressive children will become adult criminals, but early aggression is still a significant risk
factor, deemed a predictor for the likelihood of later offending (Huesmann, Eron & Dubow 2002).

2.4.1.5 Lack of empathy

A lack of empathy has also been remarked upon as a significant individual characteristic in theories about the development of antisocial and criminal behaviour (De Kemp et al. 2007). De Kemp et al. (2007) note that empathy may encourage pro-social behaviour as well as inhibit harmful behaviour toward others. Similarly, it is popularly believed that low empathy is a significant personal factor which is associated with offending, ‘on the assumption that people who can appreciate or experience a victim’s feelings (or both) are less likely to victimize someone’ (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 47).

2.4.1.6 Substance abuse

The role of substance abuse has been identified as one of the most significant individual risk factors for youth offending (Fagan 2005; Hammersley et al. 2003; Hart et al. 2007; Herrenkohl et al. 2003; Shader 2001; Vien 2010). It is generally considered the most powerful dynamic individual risk factor for juvenile offending (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Vien (2010) argues that the association of substance abuse with youth offending may be due to the normalisation of substance abuse by young people, revealed in the increase in drug-related offences and the high rate of drug usage reported. Furthermore, Vien (2010) even concluded that substance abuse was the strongest risk factor predicting serious or persistent offending committed by young people.

Hart et al. (2007) stress the relationship between substance abuse and antisocial behaviour when they conclude that ‘where there is one behaviour there is usually the other’. Similarly, Hammersley et al. (2003, p. 2) concluded that there were common risk factors for both substance abuse and youth offending and the combination of these issues would significantly increase the likelihood of becoming persistent offenders and of substance dependence among young people.

2.4.2 Family risk factors

According to Maderthaner (2005) is the strongest and most important support, as well as the first socialisation agent for young people (. The family has been and continues to be the
central socialising institution responsible for transmitting norms, values, beliefs and ideals to the youth generation (Loury 1987). According to this view, if families fail to satisfactorily fulfil this function, negative consequences may influence the individual and therefore society (Patchin 2006). Family factors were identified as the most significant influence on youth development (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Academic studies in different countries also confirm the importance of family factors as predictors of offending (Boshier 2011; NT Dang 2008, 2011a; Farrington 2011; Farrington, Coid & Murray 2009; Farrington & Welsh 2008; Ionuţ 2012; Junger-Tas 2012; Patchin 2006; Public Safety Canada 2009).

Heilbrun, Goldstein and Redding (2005) argue that family-related risk factors are probably the strongest predictors of juvenile antisocial behaviour and youth offending. Arthur (2006, p. 2) has concluded that the family has been considered the main influence on the existence or absence of youth offending from the nineteenth century to the present; and the development or decline of youth offending and antisocial behaviour could be predicted by examining the relationship between parents and children. Steinberg (quoted in Mendel 2002, p. 14) asserts, ‘There is no single cause of youth violence, but when there is a common factor that cuts across different causes, it is usually some kind of family dysfunction’. Studies of youth offending suggest that family dysfunction such as ineffective or harsh discipline, lack of parental supervision and school problems often result in youth involvement with delinquent peers which then leads to their delinquency and, in turn, offending (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005).

Although most of the studies on family risk factors for youth offending were conducted in countries other than Vietnam, their findings provide a useful springboard to examine the Vietnamese situation. The findings from these studies could help in constructing a framework to further analyse the dynamics of families and the impacts of family risk factors on youth offending in Vietnam.

2.4.2.1 Child-rearing methods

There is a significant association between child-rearing methods and youth offending, and several types of negative child-rearing methods are predictive of juvenile delinquency. Supervision of children, discipline, emotional relationships of warmth or coldness and the involvement of parents with children are identified as the most important aspects of child-rearing (Farrington & Welsh 2008).
Parental supervision refers to the degree of monitoring by parents of the child’s activities and their degree of watchfulness or vigilance’ (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 62). Among all the child-rearing methods, lack of parental supervision is usually identified as the strongest and most replicable factor which predicts youth offending (Farrington & Loeber 1999; Smith & Stern 1997) and typically doubles the risk of offending (Farrington & Welsh 2008). Poor supervision may be one of the most important ways in which parents fail to protect their children from involvement in criminal activity, with greater supervision regimes resulting in a lower risk of children becoming involved in criminal activities (Arthur 2006). The Audit Commission study of 103 young offenders under supervision orders in London also concluded that parental supervision was the single most important factor in explaining youth offending (cited in Arthur 2006). Previous studies have shown that parents who leave their children unsupervised from an early age lacking knowledge about the whereabouts of their children when they are outside the home, tend to have delinquent children (Farrington & Welsh 2008).

Parental discipline refers to the ways parents respond to their children’s behaviour. Farrington and Welsh (2008) concluded that harsh or punitive discipline, including physical punishment, is a predictor of not only children’s delinquency but also later arrests for violence up to age 30 years. Moreover, erratic or inconsistent discipline is also a predictor of youth offending (Farrington & Welsh 2008). Low parental reinforcement of good behaviour in children, just like inappropriate responding to antisocial behaviour, also predicts delinquency (Farrington & Loeber 1999; Farrington & Welsh 2008).

Low parental involvement in a child’s activities, such as joining in leisure activities, parent-child communication and family cohesiveness also predicts delinquency (Farrington & Welsh 2008). In the Cambridge study, it was also found that the likelihood of a boy’s conviction doubled if his father never joined in his leisure activities. Similarly, poor parent-child communication and low family cohesiveness were identified as predictors of delinquency in the Pittsburgh Youth Study and the Chicago Youth Development Study (cited in Farrington & Welsh 2008).

Recently, research on youth offending in Vietnam has focused more on the role of the family unit behind instances of youth offending, and child-rearing methods are considered a significant risk factor for youth offending in Vietnam (NT Dang 2007, 2008, 2011a; DT Ho 2002; Ngo 2010; TMN Nguyen 2010; VT Nguyen 2012). NT Dang (2007, p. 19) has argued
that inconsistent child-rearing practices was a significant influence on the formation and development of a child’s personality. This is consistent with findings from other studies (Do 2000; Hunt 2005) which found that one of the most significant factors of youth offending in the family domain was the way parents raised their children. Lack of effective methods to educate children, or the inconsistent behaviour of parents with their children, including harsh or lax discipline and disagreement between parents in dealing with their children’s behaviour, are blamed for the increase in youth offending (Hunt 2005; Ngo 2010). Do (2000) argues that harsh discipline and parental violence toward children are significant reasons for children running away from home and, as a consequence, joining delinquent peers and committing crimes.

2.4.2.2 Child abuse and neglect

Children who are physically abused or neglected are more likely to become offenders later in life (Bender 2010; Doolan et al. 2013; Fagan 2005; Farrington & Welsh 2008; Stewart, Livingston & Dennison 2008). Previous studies have shown that abused or neglected children are more likely to be arrested as juveniles and as adults. Child sexual and physical abuse are predictors for later offending even after controlling for other factors like gender, ethnicity and age (Farrington & Welsh 2008). Abuse and neglect had been mentioned in several studies in Vietnam (such as NT Dang 2008; General Department of Criminal Investigation and Crime Prevention – Ministry of Public Security Vietnam 2011; Hoang 2011; TMN Nguyen 2010), but most of these studies focused on these factors in terms of children’s rights, human rights, domestic violence, or education. Therefore, although negative outcomes of child abuse and neglect are indicated, the understanding of these factors as risk factors for youth offending is still limited.

2.4.2.3 Parental conflict and disrupted families

A broken home has a significant impact on the extent or degree of youth offending. In general, it is found that children who are separated from a biological parent tend to offend more than children from intact families do. Farrington and Welsh (2008) reviewed previous research in some Western countries and argued that boys who experienced a parental divorce or separation before the age of five years had double the risk of conviction up to age 32 years and boys from single-parent families were also more likely to be convicted. A broken home as a result of divorce and separation appeared to have a greater impact on the likelihood of
youth offending compared to the death of father or mother. The meta-analysis by Wells and Rankin (1991) also confirmed that the probability of youth offending was lower when broken homes are caused by death rather than by divorce or parental separation. Moreover, remarriage (which happens more often after divorce or separation rather than after death) was also identified as increasing the risk of offending which suggested the adverse effect of step-parents on young people (Pagani et al. 1998).

However, while a broken home may not of itsel f be a reliable predictor of delinquency, parental conflict tends to be a more consistent predictor for youth offending (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 68). Parental conflict has been identified as predicting delinquency in previous studies (Farrington & Loeber 1999). It is clear that parental conflict and inter-parental violence are the factors which predict a child’s antisocial behaviour (Farrington & Welsh 2008). In the Christchurch Health and Development Study, Fergusson and Horwood (1998) found that there was an increased likelihood of committing both violent and property offenses among the children who experienced violence between their parents.

In Vietnam, there is an increased tendency toward offending among youth from broken families (both because of a parent’s death and divorce) (NT Dang 2007, p. 18). Therefore, it is essential to further investigate the effects of broken homes and family conflict on young people in Vietnam and their likelihood of committing offences.

2.4.2.4 Criminal parents, siblings and other family members

Several studies assert that there is no doubt that criminal parents tend to have delinquent and criminal children (Farrington 2011; Farrington, Coid & Murray 2009; Farrington & Welsh 2003 2008). Farrington and Welsh (2008) indicated that crimes were usually concentrated in particular families. They found in the Cambridge study that half of the offences were committed by members of only six per cent of all families (Farrington & Welsh 2008). Having a convicted father, mother, brothers, or sisters have been identified as a predictor of a boy’s subsequent convictions and all these members of the family were independently important as predictors (Farrington, Barnes & Lambert 1996; Farrington et al. 2001; Farrington & Welsh 2008).

Results from the Pittsburgh Youth Study also found that arrests of not only parents and siblings but also uncles, aunts and grandparents were associated with the youth’s own offending. In such cases, the conduct of these family members may act as a predictor for the
future offending of the young male. The most significant predictor for youth offending was the arrest of the father which independently predicted the boy’s conviction (Farrington et al. 2001).

Having criminal parents and siblings is a designated significant risk factor for youth offending in Vietnam. According to NT Dang (2007, p. 26), several studies in Vietnam have found that most juvenile offenders have parents who committed offences, or were engaged in illegal activities.

2.4.2.5 Other family risk factors

The size of the household may influence many areas of family life or lifestyle which can lead to children’s behavioural problems (Maderthaner 2005) and large family size is a strong and replicable predictor of youth offending, both self-reported delinquency and convictions (Farrington & Welsh 2008). However, large family size may not directly influence youth offending but through the relationship with other risk factors. Farrington (1997, p. 387) concludes that large family size did not necessarily contribute to youth offending problems. The problem is that large family size has a significant association with other family factors contributing to youth offending. Children from large families may experience more difficulty in learning norms, forming an identity and then developing a positive self-image which increases the likelihood they are exposed to delinquency (Angenent & De Man 1996, p. 90).

There are also several family factors predictive of youthful offending and antisocial behaviour among children. For instance, early childbearing, teenage motherhood of the offenders or an unmarried mother are the risk factors for youth offending. It is suggested that teenage mothers are associated with low-income families, low welfare support, the absence of biological fathers and the use of poor child-rearing methods. These increase the likelihood of delinquency (Farrington & Welsh 2008). Parents’ substance abuse is also a risk factor for youth offending. For instance, Farrington and Welsh (2008) argued that maternal smoking significantly predicted children’s delinquency, especially when it was combined with other risk factors such as a teenage mother, a single-parent family or an unwanted pregnancy (p. 70). However, a review of the literature shows that most of these factors have never been investigated in the relationship with youth offending in Vietnam.
2.4.3 School risk factors

Apart from family, the school also plays an important part in the development of young people. Hirschi (1969) argued that good academic achievement and strong attachment to the school setting could decrease the chances of a child’s involvement in negative relationships (cited in Shoemaker 2008, p. 163). However, there are not only positive but also adverse effects from school on children and young people. Several risk factors related to the school environment contribute to the development of antisocial and delinquent behaviour among young people. These include low academic performance and school violence (Hawkins et al. 2000). School-based risk factors such as low academic achievement, low commitment to school and school expulsion\textsuperscript{18} are also associated with violent and delinquent behaviour (Haines & Case 2005; Hinshaw 1992; Williamson, Ashby & Webber 2005).

School risk factors are identified as being associated with other individual, family and community risk factors (Borowsky, Ireland & Resnick 2002; Shepherd, Green & Omobien 2005; Taylor et al. 2004; Zara & Farrington 2009). Therefore, it has been concluded that school-related factors may significantly affect youth offending by reducing the protective factors for particular at-risk youth (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Regarding social development theory, it has been claimed that young people, who have a positive attitude toward school are ‘more resilient and better able to overcome other potential delinquency producing factors in their lives’ (Shoemaker 2008, p. 163). However, those who have problems at school including academic failure, low school bonding, truancy, school dropout and exclusion, bullying and violence at school may be significantly at higher risk of offending compared to other students. It has been identified that academic failure, frequent absences, withdrawal from school, multiple school transitions and delinquent peers as school-related factors are associated with youth offending (Hawkins et al. 2000).

2.4.3.1 Academic performance

Social science studies have consistently identified a strong relationship between academic performance and youth offending, in that those who suffer academic failure or low academic achievement are more likely to be associated with delinquency and later offending (Felson & Staff 2006; Lawrence 2007; Shoemaker 2008, 2009).

\textsuperscript{18} The case that a student is forced to leave school because of serious academic or behaviour issues.
Shoemaker (2008) synthesised previous studies and explained that low academic achievement was frustrating to students and it decreased a student’s motivation, and in turn, increased the likelihood of their involvement in offending. Moreover, ‘low academic achievement can lead to a rejection of the school as an institution as well as a refusal of the values for which the school stands’ (Shoemaker 2008). There is also a greater tendency for low-achieving youths to be recruited and become involved in gangs (Cohen cited in Shoemaker 2008, p. 163).

According to social bond theory, the association of academic issues and offending is related to the weak attachment of a young person to school through teachers and peers (school disconnectedness). This increases the likelihood of youth involvement in offending (Shoemaker 2008). Shoemaker (2008) concludes that low grades at school may contribute to the possibility of youth offending, yet academic success seems to help overcome the problems of youth.

2.4.3.2 Low school bonding and truancy

It has been noted by Herrenkohl and his associates (2003, p. 223) that the children who had issues with academic achievement, school bonding and educational aspirations in primary and lower secondary school were at higher risk of youth offending (cited in Shader 2001). Similarly, Shoemaker (2008) concluded that children were more likely to be involved in offending when their bonding or connection with the school system was weak (p. 161). Likewise, Bender (2012) argued that school disengagement increased the likelihood of youth offending. This was in agreement with Snyder and Smith (2015) who found that young people who were involved in antisocial behaviours were less engaged in their schools than other students. However, they also pointed out that there was a lack of studies investigating youth offending and the relationship with school bonding and delinquency (Snyder & Smith 2015).

Regarding truancy, Farrington (1989) has found that high truancy rates at between the ages of 12 and 14 years were significantly related to an increase in violence during adolescence and adulthood. Moreover, truancy and dropping out of school have a strong relationship with low bonding to school and they are furthermore actual indicators of low school bonding (Hawkins et al. 2000). The relationship between truancy and youth offending has also been confirmed
by Heilbrun, Goldstein and Redding (2005), who reviewed the literature and concluded that the relationship between truancy and delinquency had been consistently established (p. 28).

2.4.3.3 School dropping out and school expulsion

Dropping out and being excluded from school are usually unwanted outcomes for students. According to the Encyclopaedia of Child Behaviour and Development, school dropout is defined as ‘leaving school without a high school diploma’ (Goldstein & Naglieri 2011). It is important to note that the category ‘dropping out of school’ includes students leaving school for any reason (Manandhar & Sthapit 2012), whereas school expulsion refers to the case where students are discouraged from coming back to school (Berridge et al. 2001). Therefore, dropping out of school is a general and broad term that covers school expulsion as well.

The effects on a student dropping out from school can be variously dependent upon the reasons for dropping out, but doing so may potentially and adversely influence the student’s life. It has been found that dropping out of school has a significant relationship with youth offending (Hawkins et al. 2000; Shoemaker 2008; Vien 2010). Shoemaker (2008) has argued that the phenomenon might cause significant financial problems not only for the students, but also for their families. The dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or paid less than those who graduated from high school (Lawrence 2007, pp. 103–104). Based on the data from Kids Count, a national report on the welfare of America’s children, Shoemaker (2008) found that about 25% of high school dropouts were unemployed for more than one full year after leaving school compared to only 11% of those who graduated from high school at the same time. Moreover, high-school graduates have greater opportunities to earn much more money over the course of their lifetimes than those who have dropped out. He argues that it is vital to consider the consequences of dropping out of school and the relationship between dropping out of school and youth offending (Shoemaker 2008, p. 167).

It was also concluded that being excluded from school was an important risk factor for youth offending. This situation not only puts the young people under less protection but also may lead to ‘damaging long-term consequences’ (Brodie cited in Berridge et al. 2001). Previous studies in Vietnam have also mentioned the negative effects of school dropout and school expulsion (NT Dang 2007; Do 2000; DM Nguyen 2014; HN Nguyen 2015). DM Nguyen (2014) suggests that in the Vietnamese school, when the students were detected seriously violating the school discipline regulations, they would be excluded, unintentionally putting
them in a situation of greater lack of supervision and inadequate management. This, in turn, increased the probability of their involvement in antisocial and criminal activities (DM Nguyen 2014, p. 149).

2.4.3.4 Grade retention

‘Grade retention is the practice where a student who has been in a specific grade level for a full school year is required to remain at that level for a subsequent school year’ (Hattie & Anderman 2013, p. 140). Although there are only a few studies about the correlation between grade retention and offending in students, several have concluded that grade retention negatively affects student behaviour (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002; Gottfredson, Fink & Graham 1994; Meador 2016; Nagin et al. 2003; Pagani et al. 2001; Xia & Kirby 2009). Pagani et al. (2001) argued that children who had behavioural problems were invariably retained – that is, kept in a grade below their age level – whereas the application of grade retention did not help in positively changing their behaviour. Many previous studies have also concluded that grade retention was not an adequate mechanism in the intervention of academic achievement, nor in solving the issues of socio-emotional adjustment among students (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002). Grade retention was identified as having a strong correlation with numerous students’ problems, such as depression and poor self-esteem (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002; Meador 2016) and aggression (Nagin et al. 2003). Moreover, school retention was also a significant predictor in dropping out of school (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002; Meador 2016; Pagani et al. 2001; Xia & Kirby 2009).

However, studies in Vietnam have tended to avoid the issue of grade retention and its adverse impacts on young students. There are no Vietnamese studies investigating the consequences of grade retention on young offenders, or the relationship between grade retention and subsequent offending.

2.4.3.5 Bullying, victimization and school violence

School violence has become a significant and complex problem in many countries in terms of its negative social effects, and as such, has attracted the recent attention of scholars and researchers (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005, p. 62). A number of existing studies of school violence and interventions for aggressive behaviour in school can be found in the literature (see Farrington & Ttofi 2007, p. 10). Most of these studies have focused on
understanding school violence and the implications for school-based prevention of the school violence, while few studies have dealt with school violence as a risk factor for youth offending.

This point is important in noting, as many previous studies focusing on the risk factors for youth offending did not mention school violence, instead pointing to other school risk factors, such as academic failure, low bonding to school, poor school grades, truancy and dropping out of school. Several authors, such as Case and Haines (2009), Farrington and Welsh (2008), Shader (2001) and Vien (2010) all focused on investigating the risk factors for youth offending and have found numerous related risk factors in the domains of individual, family, school, peer and community factors. None of these investigations has mentioned school violence as a risk factor for youth offending. Heilbrun, Goldstein and Redding (2005, p. 46) have even concluded that though the forms of school violence, such as fighting and bullying, had been more pervasive and attracted greater concern, the risks of youth violence were not too serious and these factors had been exaggerated by the researchers (p. 46).

Nevertheless, several authors have found that school safety has a substantial impact on youth offending. Farrington (1989) concluded that the boys who attended schools with high delinquency rates were more likely to have engaged in violent behaviour than other youths who went to the same school with lower rates of delinquency (cited in Hawkins et al. 2000). Similarly, Crooks et al. (2007) found that a significant relationship existed between school safety and the rates of delinquency among the students, when ‘students who attended schools with a generally safe climate were less likely to engage in violent delinquency than students who attended schools seen as less safe’ (cited in Snyder & Smith 2015). Siegfried, Ko and Kelley (2004) have also pointed out the significant relationship between victimisation and later delinquency in indicating that victims of violence are more likely to be perpetrators of violence than other people who have not experienced violence.

In Vietnam, instances of school violence and bullying in school have become more numerous. There have been several studies attempting to explain the causes of school violence and bullying (e.g. Horton 2011; TNT Nguyen 2012; TPT Nguyen & Cao 2012; TTH Nguyen & Tran 2013; VL Nguyen 2009). However, these studies only focused on the causes of school violence and bullying, not the consequences of school violence on later youth offending. The nexus between a violent school environment and subsequent commission of crimes, therefore, needs further exploration.
2.4.4 Peer-related risk factors

Heilbrun, Goldstein and Redding (2005) noted that during adolescence, when individuals become more independent and develop relationships outside the home environment, the influence of the peer group often assumes greater significance than that of the family. Therefore, peer-related risk factors become particularly important during the teenage years and are often considered as the most potent risk factors for an adolescent’s behaviour problems (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005, p. 29). Previous studies had consistently shown that adolescents who were negatively affected by peers were more likely to engage in higher levels of antisocial behaviour (Hawkins et al. 2000). Several researchers have stressed that young people with delinquent peers were ten times more likely to be involved in serious antisocial behaviour than those without delinquent peers (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005, p. 29).

Gang membership was also identified as a significant peer-related risk factor for youth offending and joining gangs could increase the level of offending among young people (Battin et al. 1998; Bouchard & Spindler 2010; Gordon et al. 2014; Melde & Esbensen 2013; O’Brien et al. 2013; CR Thomas, Holizer & Wall 2013; White 2013). Several studies have concluded that gang membership is a more significant predictor of youth offending than the presence of delinquent peers (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Bouchard and Spindler (2010) pointed out that the criminal trajectory among young offenders rocketed during a period of joining gangs and then dropped after they left the gangs. However, White (2013) notes the positive aspects of gangs (e.g. providing vulnerable young people with support and security); and that gang behaviour is not necessarily illegal or criminal behaviour (p. 39).

Having delinquent siblings is also a risk factor for youth offending, and for that reason has been grouped with family risk factors (see NT Dang 2007; Farrington, Barnes & Lambert 1996; Farrington et al. 2001; Farrington & Welsh 2008). However, having delinquent siblings doubles as both a family risk factor but also a peer risk factor. This factor is considered a peer-related risk factor in several studies. It has been concluded that the association with delinquent youth, regardless of whether they are siblings or peers, significantly increased the likelihood of juvenile offending (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005).

Being isolated or withdrawn from peers might also increase the likelihood of youth violence and offending (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Several studies have concluded that
individuals who did not join a peer group would not be exposed to pressures or reinforcements to commit offences and they had fewer opportunities to be involved in offending (KJ Thomas 2016). In support of this idea, several authors such as Tolone and Tieman (1990) and Demuth (2004) also argued that the individuals who were isolated from their peers were less engaged in offending than those who joined a group of peers.

However, other studies had shown that isolation from peers might play a significant role in youth involvement in offending. KJ Thomas (2016) concluded that while the extant literature indicated that individuals isolated from peers were generally less likely to be involved in offending than others, it was evident that several isolated youths were significantly engaged in offending.

In Vietnam, the extant literature on youth offending has never mentioned isolation from peers and peer rejection as a risk factor for youth involvement in offending. However, previous studies of youth offending in Vietnam have found that together with family risk factors, peer influence is a relatively strong predictor of youth offending. For instance, NT Dang (2007) concluded that being in a group with delinquent friends affected not only youth offending but also re-offending. Similarly, it was concluded that ‘the interaction within a group of friends may be a significant and direct cause of illegal activities among young people, because the interaction between members of the group does not usually focus on the purpose of learning, but to serve other demands’ (Pham cited in NT Dang 2007, p. 23). Ma (1998) has also argued that membership of a group of delinquent friends was a significant factor for juvenile offending, as there was a tendency to encourage, arouse and even challenge each other to compete in committing illegal activities, all of which leads to the dramatic increase in serious youth offending. Likewise, HT Nguyen (2004) stated that there was a direct effect of a group of delinquent friends on youth involvement in offending.

2.4.5 Neighbourhood and community risk factors

Previous studies have pointed out that numerous risk factors for youth offending could be found in the community domain (Wasserman et al. 2003). The risk factors in the communities and neighbourhood which were identified in previous studies, included poverty, the influence of games and online material on the internet, the availability of drugs and firearms and other neighbourhood issues.
2.4.5.1 Poverty

Many recent studies have found significant effects of poverty on youth offending (Hay & Forrest 2009). Several studies have identified that being raised in a low-income neighbourhood was a significant predictor of self-reported youth violence and offending (Farrington 1989; Henry et al. 1996). Hawkins et al. (2000) also noted that youths raised in poverty were twice as likely to commit assault and robbery, as were those raised in a middle-class environment. In support of this argument, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) even deduced that concentrated poverty and social disorganization decreased residents’ willingness to prevent youth offending and unlawful acts. Therefore, these factors provided a context rich for potential offending within a neighbourhood. Poverty and living in a disadvantaged residential area may also reduce the chance to gain social recognition which was identified as a community risk factor for youth offending (Herrenkohl et al. 2003).

Vietnam is a developing country,19 so poverty is only one among many significant problems affecting several parts of the country, especially in the mountainous and remote areas as seen in Chapter One. According to the statistics from the National Program on Protecting Children (2011–2015), in 2009 the number of children living in poverty was about 2.75 million which accounted for 11.2% of children nationwide (Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs 2010). Several previous studies had also mentioned poverty when describing the risk factors behind youth offending (Do 2000; DM Nguyen 2014; HN Nguyen 2015). However, these studies did not examine and explain the relationship between poverty and youth offending, despite agreeing that poverty might be a risk factor for juvenile offending.

2.4.5.2 The influences of online games and the internet

High engagement in the internet or with online games is among the risk factors for youth offending. Funk et al. (2004) have argued that violence in the entertainment media, especially screen-based media violence from television, movies, video games and the internet significantly predicted aggressive and violent behaviour in real life. However, they also noted that while the impacts of video games on violent behaviour had recently been examined, understanding the impact of exposure to the internet was still limited (Funk et al. 2004). It has been noted that the understanding of internet impacts on violence and aggression in real life was ‘essentially uncharted territory’ (Funk et al. 2004). Review of the literature dealing with

the relationship between the internet and youth violence and offending provided limited results as well.

In addition to violent material, there were other negative impacts from the internet, including pornography. Several studies had investigated and identified how pornography exposure might have adverse impacts on behaviour, including violence against women and other related attitudes (Hald & Malamuth 2015). Thus, pornography exposure might be a significant factor in sexual offending. Similarly, DM Nguyen (2014) stated that most young offenders, who had committed rape, admitted that they had watched porn videos and/or read porn stories before committing their offences. He then concluded that pornography was a significant risk factor for sexual crimes (DM Nguyen 2014, p. 94).

By way of contrast, many other recent studies did not find a relationship between the availability of pornography and the commission of sexual crimes (cited in Hald & Malamuth 2015). Ferguson and Hartley (2009) even stress that ‘it is time to discard the hypothesis that pornography contributes to increased sexual assault behaviour’. This raises the idea that the consumption of pornography should not be linked to sexual aggression or offending (Hald & Malamuth 2015). Therefore, the relationship between the availability of pornography and youth offending needs to be further investigated and carefully interpreted.

In terms of the influence of violent online games on offending, numerous studies have been conducted (Adachi & Willoughby 2011; CA Anderson & Bushman 2001; Breuer et al. 2015; Elson & Ferguson 2014b; Ferguson 2007; Ferguson & Kilburn 2009; Ferguson et al. 2008; Fischer et al. 2012; Funk et al. 2004; Gunter & Daly 2012; DM Nguyen 2014; HN Nguyen 2015). These have included meta-analyses, experimental research, cross-sectional correlation research and longitudinal studies as noted by Breuer et al. (2015). However, each approach has had its weaknesses and the debate regarding the relationship between violent video games and aggressive and violent behaviour remains ongoing in the mass media, as well as academic studies (Bushman & Huesmann 2014; Elson & Ferguson 2014a, 2014b; Krahé 2014; Warburton 2014).

A recent study in Vietnam (HN Nguyen 2015) investigated the risk factors for youth offending among incarcerated youths in all the reform schools, finding there was a significant relationship between games engagement and offending. H. N. Nguyen (2015, p. 202) also
suggested that further studies should focus on addressing the impacts of games on young people and their offending.

2.4.5.3 Other community risk factors

Other risk factors such as the availability of drugs and firearms and neighbourhood disorganisation were also identified in previous studies (Hawkins et al. 2000; Shader 2001). Community disorganisation includes the presence of criminal activities, availability of drugs, poor housing and gang activity (Hawkins et al. 2000). Maguin et al. (cited in Hawkins et al. 2000) found that community disorganisation and low neighbourhood attachment were also risk factors for youth violence. However, community disorganisation was more significant in predicting violence than low neighbourhood attachment. It was also found in the Rochester Youth Development Study and the Pittsburgh Youth Study in the U.S. that young people living in a high-crime neighbourhood were more violent than those living in a low-crime neighbourhood and residing in a high-crime neighbourhood was a significant risk factor for youth violence (Farrington & Welsh 2008).

Regarding the availability of drugs and firearms, Maguin et al. (cited in Hawkins et al. 2000) also found that the prevalence of drugs and firearms in the community was a risk factor for youth offending and that it increased the likelihood of violent behaviour among young people up to the age of eighteen. Hawkins et al. (2000) also concluded that exposure to violence in the home, community, school and other places increased the likelihood of youth involvement in violent behaviour and offending later in life. However, the study was unclear about the impact of neighbourhood risk factors on youth offending within both neighbourhood researchers and developmental researchers stating that community risk factors did not directly affect the likelihood of youth offending, but were mediated through individual and family factors (Farrington & Welsh 2008). Chung and Steinberg (2006) also argued that although neighbourhood structural and social characteristics had significant impacts on youth offending, it was significant to note that these community risk factors related to family and peer risk factors, significant in predicting youth offending. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the community risk factors for youth offending in the relationship with the risk factors in other domains for a more comprehensive understanding of youth offending.
2.5 Ecological paradigm in understanding risk factors for youth offending

The ecological paradigm was introduced in 1979 by Bronfenbrenner, viewing human behaviour as the result of the interaction between a person and the environment (cited in Reilly 2012). Bronfenbrenner (1979, cited in Reilly 2012) argued that the development of a child was significantly affected by the family, school, peers, neighbourhood and the community environments in which they lived. According to Reilly, children generally lived in families in a neighbourhood. At a certain age, they went to school and on reaching teenage years, they were likely to work in the community. He then argued that each of the factors, including family, school, neighbourhood and community is a system with ‘roles and norms that shape human development’ (Reilly 2012). This was closely consistent with the risk factors paradigm applied in this study. The ecology paradigm furnishes us a useful comparison here, given that the participants fit the pattern of the risk factors. Therefore, using the ecology paradigm to discuss the influences of risk factors in different domains on the likelihood of youth offending better enables us to understand the potential associations. The ecological systems described by Reilly (2012) are illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: The Systems that Affect Individuals (Reilly 2012)

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20 The ecology paradigm presented here was not the conceptual framework of this study. The ecological lens was only used for supporting the findings of the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam from the life history of the incarcerated youth. It was only secondary in nature, subordinated to the overall life history approach. Therefore, this paradigm was only briefly mentioned in this research.
It is suggested by the ecological perspective that the individual’s behaviours are formulated by the interactive relationship between the environment and the individual, with criminal behaviour being no exception (Reilly 2012). This was consistent with Farrington and Welsh (2008) when they argued that youth offending might be assumed as a consequence of the interaction between the individual and the environment. Reilly (2012) adopted the ecological approach in his study and described the risk factors for youth offending using three levels, including the macro level (community), meso level (family structure and influences from peers) and micro level (psychological, biological and mental characteristics).

![Figure 2.2: The Levels of Risk Factors for Youth Offending (Reilly 2012)](image)

This approach is useful in understanding the risk factors for youth offending, especially in terms of understanding the correlation between these factors and their influence in contributing to youth involvement in offending.

21 Though the ecological system was first introduced by Bronfenbrenner in 1979, and there have been plenty of studies regarding ecological model, not many studies focus on the ecology system in understanding the risk factors for youth offending. The study of Reilly (2012) is one of the most systematic reviews of the risk factors for youth offending in terms of ecology paradigm recently. Therefore, this study did not mention other studies of ecological model but mostly focused on Reilly’s research as a reference for understanding the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.
2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of young offending and risk factors for youth offending, to provide a general understanding of the elements relevant to this research. Studies of youth offending are common in most Western countries and the risk factors paradigm had been used in investigating and explaining youth offending in numerous previous studies. These studies usually categorised these risk factors for youth offending in five domains, namely the individual, family, school, peer and neighbourhood risk factors. The individual risk factors include legal awareness, lack of self-control, hyperactivity and impulsiveness, risk-taking, violent and aggressive behaviour, lack of empathy and substance abuse. In the family domain, previous studies have identified child-rearing practices, child maltreatment, parental conflict, a broken home and some others as the risk factors. Academic failure, low bonding to school, truancy, dropping out of school and school expulsion, grade retention and school violence lie in the field of school risk factors, while delinquent peers and siblings and gang membership are peer-related predictors of youth offending. In the community domain, poverty, influences of the internet and online games and several other risk factors were identified. Study of the risk factors employing that paradigm, is less common in Asian countries and specifically in Vietnam. However, the findings from previous studies about risk factors for youth offending in other countries supply an initial relevant framework for understanding the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.
Chapter Three
The Prison Setting – Research Methods and Design

3.1 Introduction

An effective research design is central in assuring the quality of any research. Crighton (2008) argues that conducting research in prison settings is qualitatively different from other research because of the safety and security concerns of the institution, but also agrees that ‘a good research design outside a prison will often be a good research design within a prison’ (Crighton 2008, p. 8). A qualitative approach was utilised in this study.

3.2 Qualitative research design

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research which seeks to understand particular research issues or topics from the perspectives of its respondents. Qualitative research is especially useful in identifying and obtaining culturally-specific information related to the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of particular populations (Mack et al. 2009). ‘The knowledge gained through qualitative investigations is more informative, richer and offers enhanced understandings compared to that which can be obtained via quantitative research’ (Tewksbury 2009, p. 38). Willig (2013) argued that qualitative research was usually concerned with meaning, or how people made sense of the world in particular and how participants experienced events from their perspectives. Berg and Lune (2012, p. 3) also concluded that qualitative research referred to ‘the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things’.

The qualitative research approach enables participants to have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than in typical studies employing quantitative methods. Researchers, in turn, have the opportunity to respond immediately to the participants by using subsequent questions based on the information provided by the participants (Mack et al. 2009). Qualitative methods are especially effective in describing complex processes or phenomena, as the open-ended and inductive style of questioning of qualitative research can readily capture the inherent complexity of process (Guest, Namey & Mitchell 2012).

In the areas of criminology and criminal justice, qualitative methods can provide a deeper understanding of crimes, criminal behaviour and judicial and correctional system operations
and processing, than may be forthcoming from detached and statistical analyses (Tewksbury 2009, p. 38). In this research, the qualitative approach was appropriate in light of the multiple complexities of youth offending. The contexts of youth offending in Vietnam provides a different set of factors relative to other countries regarding political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances, as well as the juvenile justice system (Vietnam, for one, lacks a separate juvenile justice system).

In this research, a multi-method approach combining several qualitative methods explores different aspects of the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. The advantage of the multi-method approach is that the results derived from one method can be verified by other qualitative methods (Robson 2011), and multiple methods can help in overcoming the deficiencies of a single method approach (Mouton & Babbie 2001). Ritchie and Ormston (2013) argue that the employment of multiple methods can supplement the depth to the data collected for the research.

The multi-method approach was designed in three stages. The first involved document analysis. The documents used included reports from the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), the criminal case profiles, court judgments and other personal documents relating to the young offenders. (The collection and use of the documents related to the juvenile offenders required their prior consent.)

In the second stage, life history interviews were conducted with selected male prisoners aged from 18 to 30 years, who had committed offences at the age of less than 18 years, to explore their life experiences and events and find out the risk factors for their offending. On completion of the second stage, a conceptual framework for understanding the risk factors for youth offending was produced based on a combination of the outcomes from the literature review, the findings from the document analysis and the life history interviews with the young offenders.

At the third stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected public officers to explore their perceptions of the risk factors for youth offending and the effectiveness of youth offending preventative measures and the rehabilitation of young offenders. These public officers were chosen from among the people who were working in the specific departments of the MPS and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) associated with the prevention of youth offending and the rehabilitation of young offenders.
findings from life history interviews with the offenders were utilised to formulate the interview questionnaires with the public officers. The results of the interviews with these officials supplemented the findings of the risk factors for youth offending as well. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the research process in this study.

3.3 Life history approach

3.3.1 The life history method and its unique contribution

A person’s life contains various experiences related to many events, spanning various time periods and locations during his/her life. Therefore, ‘lives are generally fragmented and disjointed’ (Green 2002, p. 96). However, the events which occur in an individual’s life, are not separate but cohesive relative to other events and these may in turn be linked together to give a relatively full picture of that life. Cole and Knowles (2001) have argued that to understand the life of a human being it was important to have some insight into the context of his/her life. According to Green (2002, p. 96), the events in a person’s life are all connected. There is a desire to establish the unity and form that exists inside each individual and ‘this cohesiveness is made manifest through the narrated story of an individual’s life’.

Life-history research is among the qualitative research approaches under the larger category of narrative research which includes several methods, such as life-story research, oral history, biography, personal experience methods and narrative inquiry (Hatch & Newsom 2010, p. 431). As a narrative approach, life history has distinguishing characteristics in narrative methods that do not appear in other forms of qualitative methods. These involve a focus on individual stories (understanding individual lives through individual stories); the personal nature of the research process (the participant’s story can only be understood via the cooperation between the researcher and the participant); practical orientation (the research outcomes offer the possibility of connecting the understanding to everyday real life); and an emphasis on subjectivity (relying on the authentic voices of participants, the life history method creates confidence in the research findings (Hatch & Newsom 2010, p. 431)).
Aim: Investigating the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam

Stage 1
Document analysis

Stage 2
Life history interviews

Stage 3
Interviews with public officers

Data Analysis

Findings
- Individual factors
- Family factors
- Peer-related factors
- School factors
- Community factors

Discussion

Figure 3.1: Research Process
However, while all life histories are narratives, a narrative is not necessarily a life history (Hatch & Newsom 2010). The life history approach is significantly different from other narrative approaches. The similarity of all narrative approaches is that they focus on collecting stories of individuals. While other narrative approaches focus on making sense of individual experiences, the life history method seeks to understand broader social phenomena by investigating individual experiences (Cole & Knowles 2001). Similarly, Hatch and Newsom (2010) concluded that the unique characteristic of the life history approach is that it examines personal accounts and individual interpretations in relationship to the cultural, historical and social contexts.

According to Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 87), a life story is the story a person tells about his/her life which is concerned with understanding a person’s view and accounts of their life. Life history research intends to understand how the patterns of different life stories can be linked to their wider social, environmental, historical and political contexts (Adriansen 2012). The distinguishing feature of life history is that it embeds the individuals being researched and sets them contextually within their lives and experiences (Joyce 2008). Similarly, Hatch and Newsom (2010, p. 430) note that life history emphasises comprehensive contextualised analyses of individual lives, but it goes further than just narrative accounts of individual lives and undertakes ‘in-depth analyses of the collective contextual influences in which those lives are situated’. Life history methodology may provide an in-depth understanding of personal accounts, actions and meanings through a systematic exploration of the human condition by closely examining individuals’ living experiences (Hatch & Newsom 2010). The stories people tell from such a perspective may provide special kinds of knowledge that improve understandings of individual and collective experience (Hatch & Newsom 2010). This potentially reveals a person’s most secret thoughts and actions including their moral troubles, achievements and failures in a social context which often conflicted with their dreams and ambitions (Green 2002, p. 110).

In life history research, the participants are recognised as collaborative partners with the researchers, who are involved in all the processes of exploration, discovery and understanding of the life histories of the participants (Haglund 2004). Hatch and Newsom (2010) also note that the life history approach allows ‘authentic voices to speak for themselves’ and the voices of participants are the most important to the stories. They also
concluded that the more authentic the voices of participants, the more powerful the stories became (Hatch & Newsom 2010, p. 430).

Despite being called by several different names (‘sociologically read biography’, ‘life story located within its historical context’, ‘genealogies of context,’ and ‘stories of action within theories of context’), a common thread exists in all of these expressions of life history research, which emphasises the appearance of both story and context (Hatch & Newsom 2010). Hatch and Newsom (2010, p. 430) also stressed that if story and context were not formulated in relationships with the other, ‘the product is something other than a life history’.

There is an agreement that life history research is based on the fundamental assumption about the relationship of the general to the particular and that the general can be best understood through an analysis of the particular (Cole & Knowles 2001; Hatch & Newsom 2010). ‘Regardless of discipline, researchers who pioneered life history research in their respective fields each recognised the individual as a window into a broader social and societal conditions’ (Cole & Knowle 2001, p. 12). This does not mean that an understanding of one case can be generalised to all, but understanding one life may shed light on the complications of lives in communities (cited in Hatch & Newsom 2010).

However, the understanding and application of life history research by different researchers may vary according to their purposes and areas of study. Although there is little difference between researchers’ understanding of life story (narration), it does have different connotations in the context of the research purposes (Adriansen 2012). For instance, many researchers, including Goodson and Sikes (2001), were concerned with investigating life stories in relation to the broader societal context, whereas Bar-On (2006) and Rosenthal (1993) were interested in understanding the way the story was told. Therefore, a different research purpose has implications not only for how the analysis is performed but also for the way interviews are conducted (Adriansen 2012). The focus of this study is on the life histories of young offenders in their relationship with a broader context (family, school and community) for a better understanding the risk factors for youth offending and their impacts on young offenders in Vietnam.

3.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the life history method

Life history methodology, like other research methods, has its strengths and limitations. As the life history approach focuses on an in-depth understanding of limited cases, but not a
broad knowledge of a significant number of the researched population, it has been criticised for not being efficient or reliable for scientific purposes (Green 2002, p. 111). However, this research method has its strengths other methods lack. Bakar and Abdullah (2008, p. 7) included the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative methodology in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the life history research and concluded that ‘this approach can be used to complement findings of other methods as well as used on its own’. The strengths and weaknesses of the life history approach, according to Bakar and Abdullah (2008) are presented in Table 3.1.

Despite the shortcomings, the strengths of the life history method still pre-dominate, making it a reliable research strategy. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that life history data are valid and can be employed for developing new hypotheses, validating existing theories and generating new theories. ‘Life-history studies disrupt the assumptions of traditional social science research’ (Hatch & Newsom 2010). Moreover, life history can act as a negative case for assessing existing theories and for the recognition of new areas which require deeper and closer study (Martin 2002, p. 111). ‘The emphasis on collecting rich data with a few informants’ has significantly proved that the life history approach is scientifically based (Hatch & Newsom 2010, p. 430). Therefore, the life history approach is the most suitable form for this research to understand the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.
Table 3.1: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Life History Approach (Bakar & Abdullah 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Life history approach can provide deeper and more detailed information than other forms of research as it employs open-ended questions, which contain less of the researcher’s directives and give the informants more time to speak and explain about the information they provide.</td>
<td>• Life history research usually takes a long time as it requires individual life history data to be collected in depth and detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life history data collection is not restricted to only one informant and the informants can be selected from a small sample.</td>
<td>• The sample size in life history approach is usually small.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life history approach can generate information about the participant’s real life, which is not available through other research methods such as questionnaires.</td>
<td>• The findings from life history approach are less easily generalised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life history approach offers opportunities to understand the social processes taking place in the informant’s life at a given period.</td>
<td>• It is difficult to accumulate and systematically compare data when conducting life history research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life history approach offers the ability to approach the social and economic context, in which the informant is situated.</td>
<td>• The quality of the conduct of life history research mainly depends upon the personal characteristics and skills of the researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life history provides a detailed description of particular activities, events, circumstances and relationships of particular lives, helping to understand social change in a better way.</td>
<td>• Participation in the setting can always change the social situation in life history research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life history method can interpret participants’ lives in the past and the present and the changes they recognised.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Life history approach can properly focus on historical change, which might be lacking in other research methods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Life history approach can help with making sense of the changes in social character, in individual lives and in society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Life history approach can help with avoiding pre-judgements.</td>
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</table>
3.3.3 Data collection and analysis in the life history approach

3.3.3.1 Data collection

For collecting data in life history research, various techniques from anthropology, such as informant interviewing, participant observation, and document and artefact collection can be employed (Hatch & Newsom 2010). Similarly, Martin (2002) concluded that in-depth interviewing, autobiographies, correspondence, records and diaries were the possible techniques which could be used for life history data collection. Hatch and Newsom (2010, p. 432) argue that the life history approach requires ‘individual life stories to be told in social-historical context’. Therefore, the methods of collecting data in life history research must allow both the personal biographies and the contextual influences to be collected. They also acknowledge that there is an overlap between the techniques of collecting personal data and those used for describing the social context. Therefore, it is essential to organise the collected information ‘in a way that maximises access and ongoing visitations of that material’ (Cole & Knowles 2001, p. 96).

According to how the material is generated, there are three main types of data for life history research, including researcher-generated materials, participant-generated materials and other-generated materials (Cole & Knowles 2001; Hatch & Newsom 2010). Hatch and Newsom (2010) also noted that both life stories and understanding the contextual influences can be the resultant of the data so collected.

3.3.3.2 Data analysis

The life history approach is a qualitative research method, so the process of data analysis in the life history approach is similar to that of other qualitative research methods. However, it is important to ensure that the interpretations of the collected data are based on empirical evidence even though researchers need to be artistic and intuitive in order to make sense of the data collected. Different projects with their unique data sets require specific analytic frameworks and analytic processes. However, it is necessary to note that the main purpose of life history analysis is to make sense of data collected for the research aim, especially the data relevant to individual life stories and the contexts of the participants’ lives. Most life history researchers agree that life history data analysis must be given ‘systematic and disciplined attention’ (Cole & Knowles 2001, p. 101). However, data in life history research needs to be
effectively organised in appropriate categories in order to understand the individual life and the surrounding context.

In *Transforming qualitative data: description, analysis and interpretation*, Wolcott (cited in Cole & Knowles 2001) classifies data transformation into three main levels: description, analysis and interpretation. This classification is useful to identify different aspects in life-history data analysis. At the descriptive level, the researcher focuses on collecting and efficiently organising the data that participants offer in telling their own stories. However, at the level of analysis, it is necessary to identify potential patterns, categories and themes and compare them with the data to understanding their existence and relationships. At the interpretive level, life stories of individuals in the socio-historical contexts will be constructed from all the collected data (Cole & Knowles 2001).

However, Wolcott explained that different studies might focus on dissimilar dimensions of data transformation although every qualitative research has some elements of each level (Cole & Knowles 2001). Therefore, in life history research, when analysing collected data, several researchers might focus on description while others emphasise analysis, while some others may be interested in interpretation (Cole & Knowles 2001). It is largely agreed that life history must be ‘reflective and reflexive throughout the data collection and analysis process’ (Hatch & Newsom 2010).

In life history research, the participants are studied in relation to the context, while the researchers are essentially a part of this context. Thus, as Hatch and Newsom (2010) argued, the researcher has the responsibility to consciously make sure of their own place in the shaping of the stories and the way that information was shared with the readers. Therefore, when analysing data in life history research, researchers are required to keep track of their place in the processes of data description, analysis and interpretation. The clearer the researchers understand their processes and methods of collecting and analysing data and the reasons for using them, as well as the reflexive position throughout the research, the better the quality of the life history reports (Hatch & Newsom 2010, p. 433). This understanding is very important to the current study, given that the primary research was conducted in the Vietnamese prison context. Moreover, the broader context of family, school, peers and other social factors were also significant in understanding the participants’ life histories and their involvement in the process of offending.
3.4 Process of data collection and analysis in this study

The application of qualitative research utilising the life history approach appears to be appropriate because the context of youth offending in Vietnam is complex and influenced by many factors. For instance, young offenders may come from different types of families impacted by various familial, educational, occupational and other contextual and circumstantial factors. Therefore, it is impractical to study all of the offenders to identify the risk factors in youth offending. The qualitative techniques employed in this study include documentary analysis, life history interviews with the young offenders and interviews with the public officers, in answering the questions: ‘What are the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam?’ and ‘How do these risk factors affect youth offending in Vietnam?’

The risk factors for youth offending identified in the literature review together with the results from document analysis were the basis for the questions for life history interviews with the young offenders. The findings from the in-depth interviews about risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam were then compared with the extant literature to determine similarities and differences.

3.4.1 Documentary analysis

Secondary data arising from document analysis is a key source of information. Documents such as the reports of the MPS and particular departments including the General Department of Executing Criminal Punishment and Justice Support (TC8), the General Department of Crime Prevention and Combating (TC6); the Ministry of Justice; and the MOLISA were collected for this stage. Moreover, the criminal case files, the court judgments and other personal documents related to young offenders, which helped in writing the life histories of selected young offenders, had also been collected for analysis.

The government reports and documents were collated for an understanding of the general picture of youth offending in Vietnam as well as youth offending preventative measures and the rehabilitation of young offenders. These documents included annual reports, symposium reports relating to youth, youth offending, youth justice, prevention of youth offending and education and rehabilitation of young offenders. From these documents, initial knowledge about the situation of Vietnamese youth and youth offending in Vietnam, including the risk factors for youth offending was identified. The results of an analysis of these documents,
together with the literature review of the risk factors for youth offending, formed the basis for the design of interview schedules for the young offenders.

The personal documents of selected offenders such as case profile, court judgements and others were analysed – collected and used with the consent of participant offenders to ensure the protection of their rights and avoid ethical compromise. This meant that the collection and analysis of these documents only occurred after the first meeting between the researcher and participants, whereat the participant’s consent to collect and use their profiles in the research, was sought.

The researcher explained to the participants that the objective in collecting their personal documents was only to better understand their life history and that no private information would appear in the research, thus obviating recognition by others. Following this explanation, most participants (25 of 30) agreed to have their files collected and used for the research. Several participants explained that their offence was recorded in their case profiles and that there was no need to hide that information as it was already in the public domain:

I committed the crime myself and I cannot deny that fact. Everyone knows that. I do not mind if you read my profile and court judgement.

(Sang\textsuperscript{22} – Case 19).

Others, such as Phuc, said that they did not care much about the use of their case files and court judgements, as they thought it did not matter to them.

You can also use my profiles for your research. I do not care about that.

(Phuc – Case 16).

Some participants were even surprised to be asked about the use of their files, because they always thought that they did not have the right to give consent for such access. Prisoner profiles were managed by prison staff and were accessible with the authorisation of the prison manager. From the researcher’s personal knowledge and experience of conducting research in prisons in Vietnam, it is indeed true that the researchers did not need to ask the prisoners for

\textsuperscript{22} This is a not a real name but a code. Each participant in this study was assigned with a code. This will be discussed in more details later in this chapter.
their permission to access their files. The ethical requirements of this project, however, necessitated the need to request the interviewees regarding access to their files.

For instance, when the researcher asked Gioi (Case 9) for permission to access his files, he agreed immediately without any hesitation. He might have even thought that the researcher had already read his files prior to the interview and merely pretended to ask for his permission, as he smiled when responding to the researcher.

Yes, you can do it if you want and the prison manager agrees. I do not think that you need to ask for my permission. Many people knew my crime and I could not hide the truth. However, remember that not everything in the judgment was true.

(Gioi – Case 9)

Five other participants did not agree to have their personal documents accessed for various reasons; for example, a belief that the information was poor or a desire to be unburdened by their crimes. For instance, Son (Case 20) explained that:

You come here to do research, so I think you can access my files without my consent. However, I recommend that you ask me directly without my files. I do not want to talk much about my crime. It was in the past and it should be forgotten.

(Son – Case 20)

Hoang (Case 11) also refused to give consent for access to his files, but stressed that the information in his files was not detailed enough.

You should not spend time on my files and my personal documents. You can only have information about my offence and my punishment, but nothing about my life. So, ask me directly and you may find important information for your study.

(Hoang – Case 11)

Comments such as Hoang’s were interesting because they highlighted the significance of the life history approach for this study. It also suggests that the life history method may shed greater light on understanding the context by focusing on the participants directly, while prison records do not necessarily tell the whole story. Therefore, these five prisoners were recruited and interviewed though their prison files were not accessed.
When being asked about giving consent for accessing the files of the young offenders (which were stored in three prisons: Phu Son 4, Suoi Hai and Thanh Xuan), one manager (at Thanh Xuan) did not agree, as he was concerned about the security of the files and private information management, especially when the research was conducted in and sponsored by a foreign country (Australia). Once it was explained that this process had been approved by the TC8, which is responsible for managing all the prisons in Vietnam and that the researcher would not remove any documents from the files, he relented. The managers of the other two prisons also gave consent for the researcher to access the selected offenders’ files but only for reading and taking notes on site in the management room in the presence of prison staff. No documents were to be copied or removed from the prisons.

On working with the offenders’ files in all three prisons, it became clear that the records did not shed much light on the offenders’ life events and experiences, as the information collected from these documents was not detailed (as noted by Hoang – Case 11). The information collected from case profiles, court judgements and other documents was mostly useful for understanding the criminal activities of the offenders. However, in several specific cases, the information collected from the files also helped gain an understanding of the cases, especially when the participants did not tell the truth about their criminal activities.

In light of all the above, the main source of information about the participants’ life histories was ultimately from face-to-face interviews with the young offenders. This idea was supported by Caulfield (2012, p. 30) who stated that the information collected from interviews with offenders could provide a great deal of information not normally available through official records.

3.4.2 Life history interviews

3.4.2.1 Site of the research

Three prisons were selected as the sites of this research: Phu Son 4 prison in Thai Nguyen province; Suoi Hai prison, located in Ba Vi district; and Thanh Xuan prison, located in the Thanh Oai district of Hanoi. Two of the selected prisons are based in Hanoi city, 60 km and 30 km from the Hanoi centre, respectively. The other is located in Thai Nguyen, a mountainous province in the North of Vietnam, not far from Hanoi (around 80 km). The reasons for choosing only three prisons as the sites of the research were due to limitations of
time, funding and other conditions of the research, given the usual constraints of a Ph.D. thesis.

An important point to note in this regard is that there is no specific prison for juvenile offenders in Vietnam. When juvenile offenders are sentenced to a prison term, they serve their sentence in an adult prison. No differentiation exists between prisons as far as types of crimes, sentences or characteristics of the prisoners are concerned, a point this thesis further elaborates upon in the context of rehabilitation. However, the juvenile offenders are housed in different prison areas from the adult prisoners. Thus, in each prison, there is a relatively segregated area for the juvenile prisoners to live and work. Once these juvenile inmates reach the age of 18 years, they are transferred to the adult section of the prison.

While the TC8 oversees numerous prisons across the country, the researcher chose to focus on Hanoi and its environs, given the difficult task of entering prisons across the country. Conducting research with incarcerated offenders proved logistically difficult, given the difficulties in entering prisons. The researcher had to contact different sections within the TC8 several times to obtain approval to enter the prisons to conduct interviews. All these departments are Hanoi-based, a logistical feature that would have also made interviews in other parts of the country less feasible.

The reasons behind selecting the three prisons were also dictated by the logistics of seeking approval to conduct such research. The researcher is a lecturer at the People's Police Academy (PPA) in Hanoi and required a supporting letter from the PPA in order to be able to contact the TC8 and enter prisons to collect data. Further approval was also required for the inclusion of psychology lecturer from the PPA who participated in the interviews to ensure that unintended situations did not arise with the participants (e.g. the participants may develop negative emotional feeling because of unhappy memories). This required the psychology lecturer to travel with the researcher to each prison; he also needed approval from the PPA and the TC8. Therefore, in a two-month period of doing fieldwork in Vietnam, the researcher did not have sufficient time to visit more than the three selected prisons for collecting data, especially those in the South and other regions of Vietnam.

As all three prisons selected were in the North of Vietnam, it followed that all the participants recruited for the interviews came from the North of Vietnam, a fact that introduced a natural limitation in the study. This led to a lack of participants from the centre and the South of the
country. There are bound to be socio-cultural, economic, demographic and historical differences in various regions of Vietnam that are important to the evaluation and interpretation of this research.

Furthermore, this study only focused on young male incarcerated offenders. According to the reports of the MPS, there is always a greater predominance of young male offenders in comparison with young female offenders in Vietnam, with 96.9% of young offenders being males (Ministry of Public Security 2012). In 2014, although there was a drop in the numbers of juvenile offenders across the country, the predominance of young male offenders over females did not change. There were 8,877 male juvenile offenders (97%) with only 279 young female offenders, accounting for only 3% of the total youth offenders (Ministry of Public Security 2014). In general, there has been a stable concentration of male juvenile offenders in Vietnam for an extended period. This was similar to the proportion of young male offenders in other countries. Farrington (2007, p. 2) has concluded that most studies on offending have focused on male offenders, ‘because they commit most of the serious predatory and violent offences’. For this reason, this research focused only on young male offenders.

Previous studies have concluded that the risk factors for male youth offending and female offending were not the same and their effects on the likelihood of male and female committing offences were different as well. Though research on youth offending in Vietnam has not clearly presented the differences between the risk factors for male and female offending, studies from other countries have agreed that there were differences regarding risk factors for youth offending between males and females (Landsheer & van Dijkum 2005; Mullis et al. 2004; Wong, Slotboom & Bijleveld 2010). The scope of this thesis, in that sense, was limited to an examination of a sample of young male offenders to ensure the quality of the research and a deeper understanding of the risk factors associated with male offending. Research on female offending in Vietnam is still limited and further study in this area will hopefully be the focus of future research.

3.4.2.2 Sampling

In order to explore the risk factors for youth offending and their impacts on the young offenders from their life histories, particular incarcerated offenders were randomly selected for the in-depth interviews. Life history approach is optimal for collecting data on personal
histories, perspectives and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics were being explored (Mack et al. 2009).

When commencing the study, the researcher intended to select two groups of participants for the interviews, including the young offenders currently serving punishment in prison and those who had been released from prison after having finished serving their punishment. However, there were several ethical issues related to the willingness of the offenders released from prison, who were no longer prisoners, to participate in the research as well as the safety of the researcher when working with them. For those reasons, the offenders who had been released from prison were finally excluded from the sample of the study and only those currently in prison were selected for interviews. The exclusion of the offenders released from prison in the sample of this research posed an unfortunate limitation in the research, as such individuals might have provided further information about their rehabilitation from their own experiences during the time they were in prison, as well as after being released to re-integrate into the community. However, given the main aim of this research was to focus on the risk factors for the young offenders involved in youth offending, the information about them after being released might not be as significant as their life events before they were arrested. Therefore, the exclusion from the sample of the released offenders did not significantly affect the data collection process for this research.

In terms of sample size, it was considered preferable that a small number of participants (who could provide in-depth information rather than a large number of people selected to take part in the study), as the qualitative methodology is not about generalising from the sample but developing an in-depth understanding of a few people (Creswell & Clark 2010, p. 174).

Thirty participants (including those who did not agree their personal document to be accessed) were selected and recruited for the life history interviews. These participants were selected from hundreds of male prisoners aged 18 – 30, who had been convicted for the first time before the age of 18. These participants were interviewed once, or twice, to gain a thorough understanding of their life events and experiences in relation to their family, peers, school and other social factors. The aim was to examine the relationship between these factors and their offences.

Purposive and random sampling was employed for selecting participants for the interviews. At the beginning of the sampling, purposive technique was utilised to identify potential
participants. 'Purposive sampling refers to the purposeful selection of a given sample’ (Green 2002, p. 11). The aims of purposive sampling are mostly ‘to include as much information as possible’ and ‘to generate the information upon which the emergent design and grounded theory can be based’ (Lincoln & Guba cited in Green 2002, p. 11).

As the focus of this research was the life histories of the young male offenders, several criteria formed the basis of selection of participants for the life history interviews, including the following characteristics:

- had to be male (all female prisoners were excluded from the research);
- must have committed a crime (the nature of the crime committed did not constitute relevant criterion for selection, but it influenced the proportion of participants who committed particular offences);
- must be in prison at the time of the sampling and conduct of the interviews (those released from prison were excluded from the sample);
- must have committed an offence resulting in a custodial sentence for the first time when under the age of 18 years. All other offenders who had committed their first offence when they were over 18 years old were excluded from the sample;
- must be 18 years of age and over, but not older than 30 years of age, at the time of sampling and interviews.

By employing these criteria, over one hundred male prisoners in three prisons (Phu Son 4, Suoi Hai and Thanh Xuan) matched the criteria. However, as the time available for fieldwork was limited and a full life-history interview would take a significant amount of time, only thirty prisoner interviewees were randomly selected to be interviewed.

Among the participants, those selected from Suoi Hai prison constituted over half of the prisoners matching the criteria for sampling who were incarcerated in this prison (total of 92 prisoners). This was explained by the fact that the TC8 had recently changed the process of the management, education and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders to improve the quality of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of the juvenile offenders. In the previous few years, juvenile offenders were sent to any prison after being judged and sentenced.
However, according to the recent decision of TC8, juvenile prisoners were relocated and transferred to nominated prisons, including Suoi Hai and Phu Son 4 prisons.

In these nominated prisons such as Suoi Hai, juvenile prisoners were managed differently in an area separate from the areas of adult prisoner management, and the prison processes were not as strictly applied as elsewhere in the prison. The juvenile prisoners would also have to leave the juvenile prisoners management area and move to the adult areas (inside the same prison) upon reaching 18 years, as they were considered ‘adult prisoners’ at that time. The prisoners who had moved from the juvenile area to the adult area were the primary focus for the sampling of this study. There were some cases in which the offenders were under 18 years of age at the time of committing their crimes, but during the period of investigation, prosecution and judgment, they were held in pre-trial detention facilities (which might last for over one year, as in the cases of Phuc – Case 16, Sang – Case 19 and Thang – Case 22). These prisoners were more than 18 years of age at the time of imprisonment, so were sent directly to the adult prisoners’ management areas and treated like other adult prisoners. Nonetheless, these prisoners were also included in the research sample and thus could be found in the offender’s files held at the prisons.

In the Suoi Hai prison, the researcher contacted the manager and the prisoner profiles management officers to search for the prisoners who matched the listed criteria. After a search of the computer-based data in accord with the pre-determined criteria, 79 matched profiles were identified with basic information such as name, year of birth, age when committing the crime (all were under 18), place of residence before committing crime, types of crime committed, length of sentence, reduction of punishment time and period of sentence time remaining. A list of the matching profiles, numbered from 1 to 79 and sorted by type of crime committed, was printed and given to the researcher so that he could select participants for the interviews. As all of the profiles matched the sampling criteria, the participants were randomly listed and the first name selected, then every fifth prisoner listed. Sixteen files were selected including Nos. 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51, 56, 61, 66, 71 and 76. The officers who were responsible for managing the groups of prisoners (each group contained 20 – 30 prisoners) were asked to talk privately to each of the prisoners and give them the related documents with information about the research (flyer, introduction, interview schedule with questions, and an explanation about the research). It was stressed that the selected prisoners had no obligation to participate in the interviews and that they could unconditionally cease at
any time without giving reasons. Among the 16 selected prisoners, after having the purpose of the research and the process of conducting the interviews explained, ten agreed to participate in the interviews; five others asked to talk directly to the researcher before deciding if they would participate in the research; and one refused to participate. The researcher then entered the prison, talked directly to each of the five prisoners and explained all the issues related. Finally, all these five prisoners agreed to participate in the interviews. Thus, interviews were conducted with 15 participants located at Suoi Hai prison.

In Phu Son 4 prison, a similar process was followed, identifying and selecting participants for the interviews. However, the number of the prisoners whose profiles matched the sampling criteria was less than that of Suoi Hai prison, with 54 prisoners. A list of 54 randomly listed prisoners was produced and prisoners numbered 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 16, 31, 36, 41, 46 and 51 were selected as potential participants in the research. One was undergoing medical treatment in the prison dispensary and thus excluded. The researcher spent the first day meeting each of the 10 potential participants and directly explained the purpose of the research as well as the process for conducting the interviews and managing the collected data. All the questions asked by the potential participants were answered, and all of the ten selected prisoners agreed to participate in the research.

Thanh Xuan prison once managed juvenile prisoners, but at the time of conducting the interviews, there were no juvenile prisoners in this prison, having been transferred to other prisons, including the Suoi Hai and Phu Son 4 prisons. In this prison, only 24 prisoners met the sampling criteria. Some of them were once classed as juvenile offenders serving punishment in this prison, but were transferred to the adult prisoners’ area when reaching 18 years. The rest were also juvenile offenders, but had turned 18 years before being sent to the prison to serve their sentence.

Six potential participants were randomly selected for interviews. These were numbered 1, 5, 9, 13, 17 and 21. The researcher met the chosen participants directly to explain the research and answer their questions regarding the research process and other relevant issues. Five prisoners agreed to participate. The remaining one also agreed to participate in the research, but when answering questions he was not open and not very forthcoming. He always gave answers such as ‘I do not know’, ‘I do not remember’, or ‘I have nothing to say about that’. Thus, the researcher stopped the interview with him as the information was very poor and it was difficult to ensure an acceptable quality of interview outcomes. Further information from
the prison staff showed that this prisoner was perceived as not very honest. Therefore, this prisoner was excluded from the participants for interviews and only five participants were recruited from Thanh Xuan prison. Overall, in the three prisons, a total of thirty male prisoners was recruited as participants for survey interviews.

3.4.2.3 Pilot Interviews

A pilot study is defined as ‘a small-scale test of the methods and procedures to be used on a larger scale’ (Porta 2008). It is suggested that the first step of data collection in any research should include a pilot study to identify and reduce the potential problems before conducting the research on a larger scale (Robson 2002). Leon, Davis, and Kraemer (2011) state that the results from a pilot study can help with identifying the feasibility as well as the modifications needed in designing the research for a larger-scale study. Pilot studies are important in any research, but are particularly vital in testing such sensitive environments as that of a prison. This eliminates unwanted outcomes once approval for conducting the research in prison is granted (King & Liebling 2008).

In this research, it was crucial to ensure that the interviews with the prisoners would be conducted in an efficient way and the results from the interviews would be useful for the purpose of the research. Therefore, prior to conducting interviews with the selected participants, two pilot interviews were carried out with two prisoners in Suoi Hai prison to evaluate and overcome any potential issues that might arise during the interviews. The pilot interviews focused on evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the questions being asked in the interview schedule to collect the participants’ life histories. At this stage, the pilot also offered an opportunity to recheck the appropriateness of the language used in the interview schedule, consent form and participant information form, as pilot interviews are significant in ensuring appropriate language and terms are used in the main research (Nee 2004).

During the pilot interviews, the first participant spent a lot of time talking about his family while the second focused more on individual experiences and feelings, although family factors were still an important part of this interview. Both participants agreed that they felt at ease answering the questions, which were not sensitive. Moreover, both emphasised the importance of discussing the aims of the research, the interview schedule and the interview questions with the researcher before the interview, as it helped them understand not only the
purpose of the research and the process of the interviews but also their roles as participants in the research. There were also some comments from both participants that several questions were quite difficult to understand and answer (such as their understanding about the policy related to youth offending and the effectiveness of crime prevention), requiring the researcher to rephrase and adjust the questions in a less complex way. This suggested that the questions should be presented in a less academic way, as some of the questions were quite difficult to understand without further explanation. Given that the participants were all prisoners with uneven levels of education and comprehension, the whole interview schedule was reviewed and some questions were modified to be clearer and more understandable for the main sample of the research.

Overall, the pilot interviews were significant in increasing not only the familiarity and confidence of the researcher with the interview schedule but the effectiveness of the interview schedule for the main sample of the research, especially in terms of language used in the interviews and the appropriateness of the target questions.

3.4.2.4 Process of conducting interviews

Before approaching the selected prisons to collect data, the researcher contacted the TC8, responsible for managing all prisons in Vietnam (excepting prisons under the control of the army, where prisoners associated with the military serve their sentences) to obtain the approvals to enter those prisons to conduct the research. Approvals were granted (with a supporting letter from the director of the PPA, where the researcher worked).

To ensure the quality of the interviews as well as the wellbeing of the participants during the interviews, the researcher requested the director of the PPA to allow a lecturer (psychologist) from the Department of Psychology at the PPA to accompany him to the prisons for conducting the interviews. This lecturer had been working in the area of psychology for more than ten years and was experienced in general, criminal and youth psychology as well as consulting in general psychology. Formal permission and a letter of introduction for both the psychology lecture and the researcher to conduct the interviews in the prisons were obtained from the director of the PPA before conducting the interviews.

The psychologist did not take part in the interviews as an interviewer or a researcher, acting only as a support for the participant to ensure that they would not face any psychological problems when participating in the interviews. Arrangements were made for him to wait in
another room close to the interview room with the facilities so that he could still do his work during that time. In fact, he only took part in several interviews for some minutes when the participants were upset when recalling unhappy experiences in the past. However, in all the cases, no significant issues resulted, so the psychologist did not need to provide support and counselling.

In all three prisons, when first arriving, the researcher consulted with the managers of the prisons to arrange the interviews and ensure the interviews would be carried out safely and efficiently. He requested a private room in each prison, which was separate from the areas of prisoner management as well as separate from staff offices. This was not difficult as there were several meeting rooms, visiting rooms and spare rooms in each prison for interviews. To ensure the safety of the researcher during the interviews, guards were also present for each interview. All of the interviews were conducted inside the prison area, which was under the control of the police with various safety measures. In each prison, one officer acted as ‘liaison officer’ to support the researcher during the interviews. This officer was given a list of the participants and was responsible for calling and receiving the participants one by one from the controlled area in the prison; taking them to the interview room for interviewing and then taking the participants back to the controlled area when the interview finished. Doctors, who worked in the dispensary of the prison, were also on stand-by and medical treatments prepared in case of need during the interviews. However, no serious health issues emerged during the interviews and the prison doctors not called upon.

In most of the interviews, the participants were initially wary of allowing the interviews to be recorded, being concerned that the things they said might be sensitive or self-incriminating, thereby compromising them. However, the researcher explained that he was under no obligation to provide the interview material to anyone or any institution and the material would be kept privately secure. Moreover, during the interviews, it was stressed repeatedly that the interviewees think thoroughly before answering any questions and they might even refuse to answer any question put to them. It was also explained to the participants that the main purpose of recording the interviews was for the quality of the supplied information; if they changed their minds during or after the interviews, the recordings would be deleted immediately in the presence of both the researcher and the participant. Twenty participants agreed to be recorded during the interviews and ten others preferred the researcher to take notes, as ‘it is easier for me to talk without being recorded’ (Hoang – Case 11). In all
interviews, regardless whether the participants accepted their answers being recorded, notes were taken as a supplementary method of information collection.

3.4.2.5 Data analysis

Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed using Microsoft Word. The transcriptions were then combined with other sources of information, such as prisoner files, court judgements, other documents related to the prisoners, as the basis for writing the case studies. However, as earlier noted, several participants did not agree to their files being accessed by the researcher, while data collected from the files of other participants was poor. Therefore, the main source for writing the case studies was the data gathered from the life history interviews. A thematic analysis was conducted on each case to identify the risk factors for youth offending and their impact on the likelihood of youth involvement in offending.

Thematic analysis is a method of organising and describing a data set in rich detail by identifying, analysing and presenting themes from the data set (Braun & Clarke 2006). Caulfield (2012) argues that when employing thematic analysis, the focus is more on the thing being mentioned rather than how it was mentioned, which allows the most outstanding themes to be identified from the data set.

Each of the case studies was analysed with a checklist of risk factors, as presented in Table 3.2. This table contains a list of risk factors for youth offending categorised in five domains, namely the individual, family, peer, school and community. The significance of each risk factor was rated against a scale of four levels of importance.

To ensure the data collected was analysed for an effective understanding of the risk factors related to youth offending and their effects on the likelihood of youth involvement in criminal activities, an inter-rater reliability check was conducted for each of the case studies (Figure 3.2).
### Table 3.2: Checklist of the Risk Factors

**CASE STUDY: No.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Less important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
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<td>Physical health problems</td>
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<td>Experience of trauma</td>
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<td>Difficulty in concentration</td>
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<td>Aggressive and violent behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restlessness/hyperactivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low self-control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk-taking behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse (drug, alcohol)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement with other illegal activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of legal knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Separation from parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor family bonding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low level of parental involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor parent-child relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrupted family, broken home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inconsistent discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal parents and family members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental substance abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young mother, teenage parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remarriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large family size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Run away from home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Academic failure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Negative attitude to school and study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Low bonding to school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Truancy</td>
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<td>Grade retention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bullying in school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School violence</td>
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<td>Dropping out of school or expulsion from school</td>
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<td>The relationship between school and family</td>
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<td>Management of school</td>
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<td>Peers</td>
<td>Involvement with delinquent peers and being influenced</td>
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<td>Gang members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Delinquent siblings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Isolated by peers</td>
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<td>Community / environment</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
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<td>Violent games</td>
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<td>Negative influences of the internet</td>
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<td>Availability of drugs and firearms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neighbourhood disorder</td>
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<td>Issues of society management</td>
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</table>
It has been argued that the quality of the findings would be improved if ‘one view is tempered by another’ (Armstrong et al. 1997, p. 598). The data collected should be ideally evaluated by multiple raters rather than one to reduce the likelihood of personal biases (Liao, Hunt & Chen 2010). Inter-rater reliability is usually employed to ensure the consistency of findings from an analytical process conducted by no less than two researchers. Armstrong et al. (1997, p. 597) also stressed that ‘diverse confirmatory instances in qualitative research lend weight to findings’.

To facilitate this, two other Ph.D. candidates from the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies – RMIT University (GUSS) were employed as research assistants to read the case studies and evaluate the risk factors in each case, as well as their impact on the participants’ involvement in offending. These research assistants had taken part in all previous milestone presentations by the researcher (Confirmation of Candidature and Mid – Candidature Review), so they had knowledge of the research, and the researcher’s focus.

Before the two research assistants took part in the inter-rater process, they were informed again by the researcher about the aim, research questions and the research methods and design. The researcher also explained the purpose and the requirements of the inter-rater process, as well as the rating criteria. From the literature review, a list of risk factors for youth offending had been identified and categorised in five domains, namely, the individual, family, school, peer and community risk factors. This list was attached to each case study. The researcher also conducted a rating by himself with each of the case studies, while the two other researchers individually evaluated the risk factors in each case. This process took some time (about ten weeks) as the raters had to read the cases from beginning to end to understand
the circumstances of the participants before these offenders committed their offences. The raters then completed the checklist of the risk factors for each case to rate their impact on the conviction of the participant. Each risk factor was rated in terms of four levels of importance; very important, important, less important and not important.

After all three raters had completed their tasks in completing the thirty checklists of the risk factors for the thirty cases, the checklists were collected by the researcher to make comparisons between the three raters about each risk factor in each case. In general, there was common ground in identifying the dominant risk factors, but there were differences in the rating of importance of the risk factors in the case studies. This suggested varying points of view from different raters about the significance of selected risk factors in the same cases. The researcher met and discussed the discrepancies in the rating of the risk factors in the case studies. After the discussion, a final checklist of risk factors for each case study was produced with a synthesis of information from the three raters and these checklists were used for discussing the findings of the research. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

3.4.2.6 Ethical considerations

It is important to consider the ethical issues associated with a research study, ensuring the quality of the research and anticipating ethical problems that may arise (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2010). This is particularly important regarding such vulnerable populations as those in prison. In such instances, the researchers need to protect their research participants, to avoid putting them at risk and to respect their vulnerable circumstances (Creswell 2009).

This study was conducted in Vietnam, dealing with youth crime and criminals. The participants in this research were persons who had committed offences at the age of less than 18 years and who were serving custodial sentences in prison. Therefore, a number of ethical issues and potential risks needed to be considered to ensure the protection of the participants’ rights and to shield them from risks as well as to minimise disadvantageous effects they may experience as a result of their participation in the research.

First, the participants had been chosen from males who were serving their punishment in prison and the interviews, therefore, had been conducted in the prisons. Consequentially, there were some problems with power imbalances, which needed to be considered. It was important to ensure that all participants clearly understood the purpose of the research project.
and voluntarily participated in the research. Before deciding to sign the consent forms, all participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the process needed to be followed to collect data and their rights to withdraw from the research at any time as well as the destruction of any material related to the interviews.

Second, the participants were formal criminals so information revealed might be deemed incriminating or compromising. However, as the main focus of this study are the risk factors for youth offending, the participants were only asked about their life experiences and the factors which influenced their involvement in offending. Moreover, they had the right to refuse to answer any specific questions if they felt at risk of revealing sensitive information, which might affect themselves or others.

The researcher tried to minimise the possibility of the participants revealing unreported offences committed by themselves and others. Participants were prompted to think thoroughly and clearly before answering the questions so that they would not disclose any unreported and incriminating crimes. The researcher also repeatedly stressed this point when asking sensitive questions. For example, when asking questions about being badly treated (physical, sexual, mental, emotional), he noted that the interviewed subject should not mention the people who had badly treated them by name, but only the fact of the mistreatment. Furthermore, when asking the participant about their parents’ involvement with criminal activities, substance misuse or violence, the researcher noted that they should only mention the specifically reported offence. This reduced the opportunity of disclosure of unreported crime.

Third, presenting their history of offending could be a significantly depressing experience that the participants might not have wanted mentioned. The researcher explained the crucial nature of the information provided for evaluating the risk factors for youth offending. The formulation and implementation of appropriate intervention strategies could reduce future youth offending. The participants could help with this process. It was stressed that the information they provided would be kept solely, and securely, for the research purpose and their name, address and other private information would not be revealed. The interviews were well prepared and conducted in a relatively private place to avoid any inconvenience to the participants.
To overcome the ethical issues, the researcher had also prepared the Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) and considered the anonymity and safety of data storage. Before conducting the interviews, a PICF, which followed the standards of informed consent, was sent to each potential participant to provide general ideas about the research, the researchers, the process of conducting the research, the considerations of ethical issues and their rights when participating in the research. The form introduced the researcher and his supervisors with detailed information of contacts, addresses, positions and institutions of work as well as the purpose of the research and the processes occurring during and after the interview. The PICF asked the potential participants for their consent to participate in the interview, followed by an oral explanation by the researcher before the first interview. In the PICF, specific issues related to confidentiality, safety and the right of the participants to withdraw from participation in the research at any time, were clearly explained. The researcher reinforced these explanations at the first meeting with each participant.

The anonymity of the participants was also considered. All participants were assigned assumed names, something tantamount to a unique research reference number (without any relation to their other information). Participants were not required to provide details about their personal background, to ensure that the identification of any individual or their data was not possible. Data extracted from the offender’s profile was also de-personalised.

During the fieldwork in Vietnam, audio records and hard copies of interview materials were stored in the research student’s locked case in his office in the PPA. Digital compression of recording files from the interviews were passworded (.rar file) and securely stored in the researcher’s personal computer. The computer was housed in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office in the PPA. When the researcher returned to Melbourne from the fieldwork, audio and hard copies of all data were stored in a locked cabinet at RMIT University. The recording files were permanently deleted following transcription.

Regarding the researcher’s safety, there was a need to balance the quality of the interviews and the safety of the researcher. Interviews were conducted in private rooms, to ensure that no other people knew about the content of the interviews and the participants felt comfortable throughout. These rooms were located inside the prisons but not very close to the prison office of the areas of prison management. Safety issues with the researcher were considered, given he had direct contact with the participants, who were prisoners and offenders. As the interviews were conducted on the prison site under the control of the police, it was unlikely
that there would be personal safety issues for the researcher. Moreover, doctors, the psychologist and guards were located near the interview room so that they could help if an urgent situation arose or if an incident occurred.

The research design strictly followed the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research23 and the guidelines of RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee with the assessment of research topics and procedures, participant vulnerability assessment, research in overseas settings assessment, risk assessment outcome, recruitment methods, consent form and so on.

Prior to collecting data for the research, ethics approval was sought from the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee and the research application had been granted ethics approval without any restrictions. At the same time, approval from the TC8 (Vietnam) had also been obtained, which allowed the researcher to enter prisons and collect data inside the prison for the research.

3.4.3 Interviews with the public officers

In order to explore the risk factors for youth offending and the effectiveness of the policies and programs targeting youth offending prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders, eight people who were working for government agencies related to youth, crime prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders had been recruited for the interviews. Among them, four officers were from the MPS, two of whom were working for the Office of National Crime Prevention and Combat program, a unit in the Bureau of the Social Order Violation Crime Investigation (C45), who had been working for a long time in the area of youth crime prevention and investigation. The two others were from the Bureau of Education, Re-education and Community Reintegration (C86) of the TC8. Four other participants taking part in the interviews were recruited from the MOLISA, of whom two were working for the Department of Social Evils Prevention with the other two stemming from the Department of Legal Affairs, under the MOLISA. They were experienced in the field of youth offending prevention in addition to the rehabilitation of young offenders. MOLISA is responsible for educating, re-educating, vocational training and community reintegrating of the offenders.

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The MOLISA is a Government Ministry, performs state management function in the following areas of: employment, vocational training, wage and salary, social insurances (compulsory social insurance, voluntary social insurance and unemployment insurance), occupational safety, people with a particular contribution to the country, social protection, child care and protection, gender equality, social evils control and prevention’. (Article 1, Decree No. 106/2012/ND-CP stipulating Functions, Duties, Authorities and Organization Structure of the MOLISA)

To contact the public officers, letters of support were obtained from the Director of the Police Academy. Attached was an introduction paper issued by the PPA, briefly introducing the researcher, the purpose of the research and the data collection process. A further attachment was the letter outlining the decision of the Minister of the MPS, allowing the researcher to pursue his Ph.D. studies in Australia. In this instance, the researcher was introduced as a lecturer of the Police Academy as well as a Ph.D. student from RMIT University, who was collecting data for his research. The documents related to the research, such as the research information, information and consent form and the interview schedules were also included. No serious problem arose in conducting the interviews with the public officers.

Prior to the interviews, the researcher met with several selected officers in specific departments in the MPS and the MOLISA. These officers had experience in areas related to the purpose of the research. Participants were selected by purposive sampling from among the people who had expertise in the research area. On the first day of arrival, after consulting with the leaders of specific departments about the process for conducting the interviews, the researcher spoke directly to the potential participants, explaining the purpose and process of the research, as well as providing other related information. Relevant documents were provided, seeking their participation in the interviews. Not all of the staff of the specific departments were selected for the interviews, as some of them were absent on business, while some others were unable to arrange a suitable time for interview due to business commitments. Given the intention to select a small number of participants with specific experience in the areas youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders, only those who had been working in these fields for over ten years were selected. Arrangements for the interviews regarding time, places and process were made after they agreed to take part in the interviews.
Limitations of time and the requirements of the research plan, meant that only eight participants from among the public officers were recruited for the interviews. However, the information they provided was significant for the research as it came from their personal experiences over long periods, working with the young offenders. This information was expected to help with a better understanding of the risk factors for youth offending as well as the prevention of youth offending and the rehabilitation of the young offenders. The findings from the interviews with the public officers provided many insights about the risk factors for youth offending, to supplement the life history interviews and document analysis.

When taking part in the interviews, only information related to the officers’ experiences in working with the young offenders in terms of the risks factors for youth offending, the prevention of youth offending and the rehabilitation of the juvenile offenders. The participants were asked about their evaluation of the risk factors for youth offending with regard to the individuals, family, peers, school and community, as well as the effects of these factors on the likelihood of youth involvement in offending. Participating officers were also asked about their assessment of the effectiveness of the programs related to youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders as well as their recommendations for improving the quality of these programs in the future.

All the interviews with the public officers were conducted in offices of the departments where they worked. This was arranged between the researcher and the leaders of selected departments prior to the interviews. Given that some of the participants were the managers of the departments, they did have their own offices and the interviews were conducted in their offices with minimal difficulties or other issues arising, such as the safety of the researcher and the interviewees and the reveal of private and sensitive information. In other instances, available meeting rooms were used for the interviews.

When being asked about recording the interviews, all participants responded that they did not want to be recorded, something that might be put down to cultural inclination. Notes were taken in all of the interviews for purpose of recording. This helped in encouraging the participants to be open when talking about their experiences and evaluations of youth offending without concerns about being recorded. However, the difficulty was that taking notes might not have resulted in the comprehensive capture of detail. Although the researcher had tried to take note of all the information offered, this was still a considerable issue, which might have affected the quality of the information collected.
In terms of ethical considerations, there were no significant issues related to the interviews, as all the participants were public officers who worked for governmental bodies and all efforts were made to alleviate this discrepancy. The information they provided was generally about their experiences related to the research, so it did not include sensitive or private information. Moreover, the participants were not asked to provide their names and private information during the interviews. The safety of the researcher and the participants were also ensured as all the interviews were conducted in the governmental organisation’s areas and both the researcher and the participants were public officers. No risk was identified for them when participating in the interviews.

The data collected from the interviews with the public officers was also analysed for relevant risk factor themes for youth offending, which worked as a supplement to the life history interviews with the offender to better understand the risk factors for youth offending in the context of Vietnam. It is very important to note that the findings are naturally shaped by the nature of the sample size, which was limited to 30 participants. This would have to be borne in mind in looking at any findings. During the interviews with public officers, the findings from the life histories were compared and confirmed. This broadened the understanding of the risk factors for youth offending from the perspectives of public officers.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided details about the methodology and methods utilised in this study for collecting and analysing data. A qualitative research design was applied utilising the life history method to investigate the risk factors for youth offending from the life histories of young incarcerated offenders. The significance of the life history approach as well as its strengths and weaknesses were briefly mentioned before the introduction of the process of data collection using the life history method. The process of using life history interviews included the selection of the site of the study, sampling method, pilot interviews, the schedule of interviews and data analysis. Ethical concerns about the life history interviews were also discussed, given that the interview was carried out with prisoners inside prisons. Interviews with the public servants were also conducted in this study and the process for these interviews was also introduced at the end of the chapter.
Chapter Four
The Offender Profiles

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is to present the profiles of the 30 incarcerated offenders in the interview sample. This sheds light on the basic information about the participants including their age profile; types of offences and age at conviction; ethnicity profile; socio-economic background; academic and school status; and, family formation factors. Comparison between the profiles of the participants and official government data was also made where appropriate and possible. This initial and basic information about the participants will help in understanding the context and circumstances of the participants before they committed their offences, thereby shedding some light on the risk factors from the life histories of the young offenders to be presented in the following chapters.

4.2 General information about the offenders

Based on the data collected from the life history interviews with the young offenders and other information from their prison files, general information about them appears in Table 4.1. This data includes age at the interview, age at first conviction, details of subsequent convictions (if any) and period(s) of incarceration, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, the area of residency, academic and school status, family composition and formation profile, and parental occupation.
Table 4.1: General Information about the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Coded Name</th>
<th>Current age</th>
<th>Age at Conviction</th>
<th>Type of Conviction</th>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Sentence (years)</th>
<th>Period in Prison</th>
<th>Previous in Reform School</th>
<th>Previous in Prison</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>School Status</th>
<th>Academic Status (Grade)</th>
<th>Family Formation</th>
<th>Parental Occupation</th>
<th>School Status</th>
<th>School Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anh</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Rape of a child</td>
<td>Muong</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>YB</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Co</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Narcotics trafficking</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>YS</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kidnapping in order to appropriate property</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>YB</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conflict violence</td>
<td>Worker Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Diep</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Intentionally inflicting injury on other persons</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Semi Rural</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>YB</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conflict violence</td>
<td>Guard farmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Duc</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Theft and Robbery by snatching (with the death of victim)</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 OB</td>
<td>2 YS</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Broken remarriage</td>
<td>Workers</td>
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<td>Duong</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Illegal Narcotics Trafficking</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1OB</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Small business</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Duy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Theft and Burglary</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 theft</td>
<td>1 adopted sister</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abandon broken</td>
<td>Workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Coded Name</td>
<td>Age at Conviction</td>
<td>Type of Conviction</td>
<td>Ethnic Origin</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Sentence (years)</td>
<td>Age of first Conviction</td>
<td>Number of Convictions</td>
<td>Previous in Prison</td>
<td>Previous in Reform School</td>
<td>Previous in Prison</td>
<td>Prison Status</td>
<td>School Status</td>
<td>Academic Status (Grade)</td>
<td>Family Formation</td>
<td>Parental Occupation</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>DO</td>
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<td>1</td>
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102
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<th>No</th>
<th>Coded Name</th>
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<th>Type of Conviction</th>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Sentence (years)</th>
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<th>Age of first Conviction</th>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>OB 1 OS</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Phuc</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Kinh</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 OS</td>
<td>DO 6</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Intentionally inflicting injury on other persons</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Only child</td>
<td>DO 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broken Abandon</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Kinh</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 YS</td>
<td>Only son</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carpenter Small business</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sang</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Trading in narcotics</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>2 OS</td>
<td>1 half-blood YB</td>
<td>RE DO EX 8</td>
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<td>Broken Divorce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gang member24 Doctor</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Murder and Robbery</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 YB</td>
<td>IN 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intact Conflict violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Worker farmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
24 Sang said that he did not really know what his father did but his relatives told him that his father was involved in gangs.
<p>| No | Coded Name | Current age | Age at Conviction | Type of Conviction | Ethnic Origin | Religion | Residence | Sentence (years) | Period in prison | Age of first Conviction | Number of Convictions | Previous in Prison | Previous in Reform School | Previous in Prison | Prison Status | School Status | School Grade | Family Formation | Parental Occupation | Occupational Status |
|----|------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 21 | Tam        | 19          | 16                | Robbery by snatching | Kinh          | No        | Urban     | 4              | 3               | 1                   | 16                   | No            | No              | 1 YS Only son     | RE DO       | 6            | Intact      | Building labourer | Farmer                 |
| 22 | Thang      | 18          | 16                | Theft, burglary and robbery | Kinh          | No        | Semi-rural | 6              | 2               | 1                   | 16                   | No            | No              | 1 OB IOS           | DO          | 9            | Intact      | Building labourer |                        |
| 23 | Tri        | 19          | 15                | Intentionally inflicting injury on others | Kinh          | No        | Rural     | 6              | 4               | 1                   | 15                   | No            | No              | 1 OS 1OB           | DO          | 7            | Intact Conflict Violence | Cottage industry |                        |
| 24 | Trong      | 18          | 17                | Organising gambling | Kinh          | No        | Semi-rural | 2              | 1               | 1                   | 17                   | No            | No              | 1 OS 1 YB          | DO          | 11           | Intact conflict | Farmer Cottage industry |                        |
| 25 | Truong     | 21          | 17                | Robbery and Illegal arrest and detaining of people | Kinh          | No        | Urban     | 8              | 4               | 1                   | 17                   | No            | No              | 1 OS DO           | 10           | Intact      | Farmer Cottage industry |                        |
| 26 | Trung      | 19          | 15                | Rape of a child     | Kinh          | CA        | Rural     | 6              | 4               | 1                   | 15                   | No            | No              | 1 YS 1 YB          | DO          | 8            | Intact Conflict | Farmers                 |                        |
| 27 | Tung       | 20          | 15                | Murders and Robbery | Kinh          | No        | Semi-rural | 10             | 5               | 1                   | 15                   | No            | No              | 1 OB 1 YB          | IN          | 10           | Intact      | Farmers Cottage industry |                        |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Coded Name</th>
<th>Current age</th>
<th>Age at Conviction</th>
<th>Type of Conviction</th>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Sentence (years)</th>
<th>Age of first Conviction</th>
<th>Period in prison</th>
<th>Previous in Reform School</th>
<th>Previous in Prison</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
<th>School Status</th>
<th>Academic Status (Grade)</th>
<th>Family Formation</th>
<th>Parental Occupation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Van</td>
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<td>Robbery</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 YS</td>
<td>RE DO</td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Vu</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Extortion of property</td>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 YB</td>
<td>RE DO</td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Conflict violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Xuong</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Intentionally inflicting injury on other persons</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rural</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 YB</td>
<td>1 YS IN</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>Remarriage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations:**

CA: Catholic  
DO: Dropping out of school  
EX: Being expelled from school  
IN: Not dropping out or being expelled from school  
OB: Older brother  
OS: Older sister  
RE: Retained  
YB: Younger brother  
YS: Younger sister
4.3 Types of conviction and sentencing

The participants in this study committed various types of crimes and were sentenced to various punishments shown in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below.

4.3.1 Types of conviction

There were 14 types of offences committed by the participants, with some committing more than one crime (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Crime Profile of the Young Offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of offences</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Official Report (%)25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Murder (including one case of murder under</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Robbery</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Narcotic-related crime (stockpiling,</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Intentionally inflicting injury on other persons</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Theft and Burglary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Robbery by snatching</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Rape of a child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Kidnapping in order to appropriate property</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Illegally stockpiling and using military weapons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Illegal arresting and detaining of people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Resisting persons in the performance of their</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Extortion of property</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Organising gamble</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Causing public disorder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the profile of the crimes committed by young offenders (Table 4.2), it can be seen that murder was the most common crime committed, with seven cases (18.4% of all crimes committed by the sample), followed by five cases each (13.2% each) for robbery, drug-related crimes and intentionally inflicting injuries on other persons, totalling 39.6%. Theft and burglary accounted for four cases (10.6%), followed by robbery by snatching (3 cases, 7.9%) and rape of a child in two cases (5.3%). Seven other types of offences were recorded in the interviews occasioning one case each (2.6% each) totalling 18.2%. These offences included kidnapping in order to appropriate property, illegally stockpiling and using military weapons, illegal detaining of people, resisting persons in the performance of their official duties, extortion of property, organising gambling and causing public disorder.

While the intention was not to focus heavily on serious and violent offenders, the selection of jailed offenders made that fact a likely outcome. These proportions were significantly different from the reports of the MPS, in which theft and burglary featured as the dominant crimes, following by intentionally inflicting injuries on other persons. According to the Report of the Program of Child Protection and Combating Crimes against Children and Juvenile Crimes in Vietnam, in 2014 there were 6,297 cases of juvenile crimes with 9,156 offenders, of whom 8,877 were male offenders (96.9%). Though there was a decrease in the numbers of juvenile criminal cases and offenders in comparison to the 2013 figures, these were still high. Among the crimes committed by young people, the proportions of which are recorded in the right-hand column of Table 4.2, the most frequently committed crimes subject to sentencing were theft (2,592 cases – 41.1%); intentionally inflicting injury on other persons (980 cases – 15.5%); robbery by snatching (369 cases – 5.95%) and robbery (312 cases – 4.95%). There were also 150 cases of rape and other sexual crimes (2.38%), 169 cases of drug-related offences (2.68%) and 79 cases of murder which accounted for 1.25% (MPS 2014).

These differences could be explained by the seriousness of the different crimes, which led to extended prison terms for those who had committed such serious offences. Those who had committed less serious crimes were understandably released sooner. According to the sampling method in this research, in which the participants were chosen as juvenile offenders at the time when committing their crimes, though adults at the time the interviews were conducted, most of the participants had been incarcerated for over two years. It followed that the sample was heavily weighted towards serious offenders, while those who had committed
less serious crimes had been released or might have fallen within the operation of the terms of the Law of Administrative Violation Handling – they were not imprisoned. According to the MPS (2014), only 4,097 offenders (44.7%) were prosecuted, while 55.3% (5,095 offenders) were not imprisoned, as they were dealt with by the Law of Administrative Violation Handling. Consequently, this division resulted in a greater concentration of serious and violent offenders in the study sample, given that all participants were recruited from within the prison population.

4.3.2 Sentencing

The length of sentences of these participants varied considerably as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Length of Sentences Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentencing</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 years of incarceration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 6 years of incarceration</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 9 years of incarceration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 12 years of incarceration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – 15 years of incarceration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding punishment, the mean sentence was 5.9 years of incarceration, while the mean period spent in prison at the time of interviews was 3.2 years. Thus, most of the participants had served approximately over half of their prison term by the time the interviews were conducted.

As can be seen in Table 4.3, almost half the participants (46.7%) were punished with a sentence ranging from four to six years of incarceration. Those who were sentenced from two to three years imprisonment and seven to nine years of incarceration accounted for reasonably high proportions of all sentences with 20% each. Ten per cent (3 participants) received a sentence of from 10 to 12 years of incarceration. Only one participant (3.3%) was sentenced for 15-years. According to the Vietnamese Penal Code, the maximum sentence applicable to a juvenile offender cannot exceed 18 years of incarceration, regardless of the
severity of the crime. In this study, the most common sentence for the interview sample ranged from two to nine years of incarceration, accounting for 86.7% of all the participants. Just over ten percent of participants received a sentence of more than ten years imprisonment, while no participant was given the most severe sentence of 18 years in prison.

Differences also exist in the regulations for sentencing juvenile offenders for different age groups in Vietnam. For instance, Phuong (Case 18) was sentenced to a 12-year incarceration period for the crime of murder, the most serious among the interview sample. While considerably less than the possible incarceration sentence of 18-year incarceration, it was the highest sentence that could be applied to Phuong, as he was just 15 years old when killing the victim. He admitted that if he had been over 18 years old when committing his crime, his sentence would have been the death penalty or a life sentence. Several others had also committed serious and violent crimes, but did not receive the harshest sentence for their age due to mitigating circumstances. There was no information about the sentencing of juvenile offenders in the reports of the MPS or any other institutions, which suggested a significant gap in the government reporting of juvenile offending statistics. Therefore, no comparison regarding the sentencing of the participants could be made in this study.

4.4 Ages and number of convictions

The age at conviction also varied, given that some participants had been convicted more than once. The ages at the time of first conviction, ages at current sentence and number of convictions are presented in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5.

4.4.1 Ages at conviction profiles

Table 4.4 shows the age of offenders at their first conviction, at any second conviction and at the time of the interview
### Table 4.4: Age at Conviction Profile

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE RANGE</th>
<th>AGE AT INTERVIEW</th>
<th>AGE AT CONVICTION</th>
<th>AGE AT FIRST CONVICTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N (% )</td>
<td>In this study N (%)</td>
<td>Official report N (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 13</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 – 15</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>7 23.3</td>
<td>2,173 23.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 – 17</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>21 70.0</td>
<td>6,517 70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 20</td>
<td>25 83.3</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 23</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 – 26</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 – 30</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>30 100.0</td>
<td>30 100.0</td>
<td>6,297 100.0</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>RANGE</th>
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<td>16.4</td>
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<td>16.3</td>
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<td>16.1</td>
<td>13 – 17</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the age at first conviction, seven participants (23.3%) were in the 14 – 16 years age bracket when convicted, while one other (3.3%) was under 14 years at time of conviction. In terms of their current sentence, two participants (6.6%) were over 18 years old when convicted and both had offended twice. The most striking feature in the age group of conviction was a concentration of offenders aged from 16 to under 18 years old at both the first conviction and current conviction, with 73.3% and 70.0% respectively. Twenty-two participants (73.3%) were also in this age group when first convicted while twenty-one (70%) were aged 16 to 18 years at the time of their current sentence. Two offenders, who had been convicted twice, had both committed their first offence at the age of 17 years and been subsequently reconvicted when they were over 20 years of age. However, another offender was first convicted at age 13 years and sent to a reform school, then committed his crime at the age of 16 (Duy – Case 7). Therefore, the proportion of offenders between 16 and 18 years old at their first convictions was higher than that of their current sentence, but the difference was only 3.3% (one participant).

---

This was also consistent with the report from the TC6 in the MPS (2014) which found that most juvenile offenders were aged between 16 and 18 years when committing crimes (Table 4.4). According to Table 4.4, the age at conviction ranged from 14 to under 18 years old. This was because of the sampling method in this study, whereby only incarcerated juvenile offenders were chosen for interviews. Therefore, there was a slight difference in age group profiles from the profile in the official report from the MPS, where the age range included those who were less than 14 years old when convicted. However, the same proportion of this group only accounted for 6% of all the convicted juveniles, which might not have significantly affected the proportions of other groups of juvenile offenders. Therefore, there was a consistency regarding the age groups at conviction between the sample and the official report. There was a concentration of young offenders aged from 16 to under 18 years old when convicted in both the sample of this study and in the report of the MPS, with 70% and 70.1% respectively. In the second largest group of offenders, including those who were aged between 14 and 16 years at conviction, there was also a similarity between the sample and the official report, with 23.3% and 23.9% respectively. The only difference was that 6.7% of those in the sample committed offences when they were over 18 years old while 6% of offenders in the official report were convicted when they were under 14 years old, but this proportion was much less than that of other age groups. This difference could also be rationalised as a consequence of the sampling method, in which those who were under 14 years old when convicted were excluded from the sample of this study.

In this study sample, the mean age of the offenders at the time of their first conviction was nearly the same as the mean age of the offenders at the time of their current conviction, the mean age being 16.1 years. This could be explained by there being only three offenders (10%) who were convicted twice, and the mean age of the first conviction among the 30 participants did not much vary when compared with the mean age at the time of their conviction leading to their incarceration at the time of interview.

However, it is important to note that the mean age of conviction as presented in Table 4.4 was lower than the actual mean age of conviction among the participants, as their ages were rounded to the nearest whole number. For instance, an offender who was convicted when he was aged 14 years and 6 months old would only be counted as 14 years old, though he was 14.5 years old at the time of his conviction. Therefore, the mean age of conviction might be

---

27 Several participants were convicted more than once, so the age of the first and the current convictions differed.
higher than the patterns presented in Table 4.4. The reason for this approach lay in the use of rounding for presenting the offenders’ age in the prisoner files, while most of the offenders only remembered their age in round numbers when convicted. Moreover, most did not remember the exact date when they committed their crimes and the date that they were arrested. Therefore, it was difficult to compare the date of birth of the participants with the date of conviction to find out their exact ages. While the exact date of birth and date of conviction were not especially important in this research in comparison with their life histories, attempting to ask for these dates might have negatively affected the relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as their attitude and willingness to take part in the interviews. Therefore, round numbers were finally used when describing the ages at first conviction, ages at conviction and ages at interview.

In terms of official statistics, there were no reports of the age at conviction or first conviction among the juvenile offenders in Vietnam, though the proportions of age groups at conviction were available. Therefore, although the average age of conviction could be generated from the official reports, there might be a gap between this generated average age and the real average age of conviction. The mean age of conviction in the report of the MPS was 16.3 years, nearly the same as the age of conviction in the sample (16.4 years old). In general, regarding age groups at conviction, the sample presented in this research was consistent with available official reports.

At the interviews, all participants were aged over 18 years. While the youngest participants were 18 years old at the time of the interview, the oldest was 30 years. However, the mean age of participants was only 19.7 years at the time of the interview, which indicated that most of the participants were much younger than the age of 30 years. This was also consistent with the age groups of the participants at interview when 83.3% (25 participants) were aged 18 to 20 years at the time of the interviews.

4.4.2 Conviction profiles

In terms of convictions, interview sample also differed in the number of their convictions. This is shown in Table 4.5
Table 4.5: Conviction Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVICTION</th>
<th>In this study</th>
<th>Official report\textsuperscript{28}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First conviction</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second conviction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4.5, it can be seen that 90% of the participants interviewed in this study were first-time offenders while three participants (10%) had been previously convicted. Two of the participants had previously been prosecuted and incarcerated while the other was sent to a reform school. Duy (Case 7) was the only one who had been sent to a reform school for his criminal activities, as he was not old enough to be prosecuted and incarcerated at the time. This was consistent with the reports of the MPS, where 80.3% of the offenders had received first time convictions while 1,797 others had been previously convicted (19.7%). In both sets of figures, the overwhelming majority had been convicted only once. However, the proportion of the participants in this study convicted more than once was lower than that in the official report. This was understandable due to the sampling method used in this research, in which those who were processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling (except those sent to a reform school) were not considered as having a previous conviction. Therefore, when evaluating the numbers of convictions, those who had been processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling, and issued with a caution, a fine, or mandatory attendance at an informal community education or training sessions, were not counted as a first conviction. Six participants (20%) had been handled under the terms of these administrative measures, other than being sent to a reform school, and they were not recorded as having a conviction. Therefore, only three participants previously incarcerated and sent to a reform school were counted as previously convicted, which led to an apparent lower pattern of reoffending in comparison with the details presented in the official report of the MPS (2014).

It should be noted that the sample does not take into account the prior antisocial dimension of the offenders, who were subsequently arrested and incarcerated. These offenders were not sent to reform schools or prisons, but only dealt with under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling or not processed at all, for various reasons. For instance, Han (Case 10) was involved in various delinquent activities and his grandparents had asked for him to be sent to a reform school, but he was not ‘qualified’ to be sent to a reform school according to the explanation from the commune authorities (as he admitted). Moreover, he had never been dealt with under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling either. Therefore, he was only prosecuted and incarcerated after attempting to kill his grandparents.

4.5 Education profile

The educational profiles of the participants are displayed in Table 4.6, which includes the highest level of education, literacy rate, grade retention and rate of dropping out or being expelled from school. There were significant differences between the sample profile and the details given in the reports of the MPS (Table 4.6).

However, the discrepancy is not surprising, as the sample for this study did not include those who had committed offences but were not incarcerated, accounting for 55.3% of all juvenile offenders (MPS 2014). It is important to note that the participants in this study had committed more serious offences than those dealt with under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling and this resulted in their incarceration. Therefore, the participants’ profiles should be expected to differ from the offender profiles presented in the report of the MPS. This is suggestive of another point of view when evaluating the patterns of youth offending and young offenders in Vietnam in terms of education, given that the participants were all from the North of Vietnam and incarcerated there. This might lead to differences in the official reports, as those who had not been prosecuted and those who were living in other areas of the country, were excluded from the sample in this study.

29 According to the Decree No. 142/2003/ND-CP dated 24 November 2003 by the Vietnamese government on the implementation of administrative measures by sending offenders to reform schools, young offenders will only be sent to a reform school when they committed particular criminal activities.
Table 4.6: Academic and School Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>In this study</th>
<th>Official report&lt;sup&gt;30&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never attended school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school (Grade 1 to Grade 5)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary school (Grade 6 to Grade 9)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary school (Grade 10 to Grade 12)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest grade average</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade range</td>
<td>4 – 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>In this study</th>
<th>Official report&lt;sup&gt;30&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the TC6 in the MPS (2014), 4.6% of Vietnamese juvenile offenders were illiterate and another 16% had never progressed beyond primary school level. Those who had attended, but not finished lower secondary school (46.6%) represented the highest proportion of offenders, while the second highest proportion was those who had attended higher secondary school (32.8%). This is presented in Table 4.6.

In this study, the vast proportion of offenders, were those whose highest education level was lower secondary school (56.7%) and higher secondary school (40%). This was similar to the report of the MPS (Table 4.5). These proportions were both higher than those in the official report. The mean highest grade of the participants was also higher than the grade of juvenile offenders in the official report by one grade, with grade 8.6 compared to grade 7.6, respectively.

The percentage of the participants who did not go beyond primary school in the sample was only 3.3%, compared to 20.6% in the report of the MPS. Nguyen (Case 15), who had the lowest schooling achievement was the only one who dropped out of school when he was in primary school (grade 4), but could read and write Vietnamese well. Thus, no participant in this study was illiterate. Though the percentages of illiterates were rather low in the report of the MPS, it was surprising and unforeseen that no illiterate participants were detected in the sample of this study. In general, the education level of participants in this study was higher than that of all juvenile offenders in Vietnam.

However, it was notable that the proportions of those dropping out of school and being expelled from school among the participants were much higher than those in the report of the MPS, with 73.3% compared to 46.6% respectively. Only eight participants were still going to school, or had just finished higher secondary school, when arrested (26.7%). While the levels of academic achievement of the participants in this research seemed to be higher than the average level of the juvenile offenders in general, the incidence of those dropping out and being excluded from school was much higher than the average rates of school dropouts among Vietnamese young offenders in general. This significant finding is discussed later in this thesis (see Section 6.2.3.3).

Of additional importance, grade retention does not feature as a serious consideration in official documentation, especially regarding the relationship to youth offending. The reports from the MPS have never mentioned grade retention when profiling juvenile offenders. Five participants (16.7%) in this study, however, were retained because of academic or behavioural problems. Interestingly, all of these participants soon dropped out of school. This suggested an adverse effect of grade retention on the retained students with a close relationship between grade retention and dropping out of school. This pattern was in agreement with previous studies in several countries that have found that grade retention was the biggest risk factor for students dropping out of school (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002; Meador 2016; Pagani et al. 2001; Xia & Kirby 2009). As well, all of the five participants were retained by the school authorities when they were studying in lower secondary school (from grade 6 to grade 9), while no participant was retained in primary school.

31 The students were not progressed to the next grade.
32 In Vietnam, students are rated with two main standards including academic achievement and conduct (or behaviour). Those who were rated with academic failure or behavioural issues may be retained or excluded from school as a consequence.
school and higher secondary school. This was consistent with the proportion of participants dropping out of school when they were in lower secondary school (56.7% – Table 4.6) given that most of the participants dropped out of school soon after being retained. This also confirmed the significant relationship between grade retention and dropping out of school. However, once again, no official figure about grade retention rates among juvenile offenders in Vietnam was available so a comparison of the relationship between grade retention and youth offending in this study and that in official reports was not possible.

4.6 Other Social Features

4.6.1 Ethnic background, religious affiliation and residence profiles

The information about ethnic background, religious affiliation and place of residence is presented in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Ethnic Backgrounds, Religious Affiliation and Place of Residence Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Affiliation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Places of Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of ethnic background, there were only three participants from an ethnic minority, accounting for 10% of the participants. Although there are no official statistics about the ethnic background of juvenile offenders, the proportion of ethnic minority participants in this research was consistent with the proportion of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. According to the Population and Housing Census in 2009, Kinh ethnicity accounted for 85.7% of the whole population.

33 Several others were not officially Buddhist but seemed to suggest having Buddhism beliefs.
population while people from other ethnic backgrounds accounted for 14.3% (General Statistics Office 2009). Therefore, the proportion of offenders from an ethnic minority background was consistent with that of the ethnic minorities in the whole country.

The people from ethnic minorities usually have difficulties in their economic and living conditions and education in comparison with the majority Kinh ethnic group. However, in this study, all the participants from an ethnic minority background were fluent in Vietnamese, as they all went to school with children of Kinh backgrounds and studied in Vietnamese (Kinh language). Notwithstanding such issues as remoteness, poverty and social disadvantage relative to others in the population, these did not impact on the interviews.

Regarding religious affiliation, the same proportion of participants (three offenders – 10%) also followed a religion (all three of them being Catholic). However, all three participants admitted that they followed Catholicism only because of their parents and they were not really engaged in religious activities. One of them (Long – Case 14) even stressed the fact that his father was Catholic, but he rarely went to church and Long follow his example. Twenty-seven participants (90%) admitted that they did not officially follow any religion, though they all admitted that their families usually venerated their ancestors. This suggested that they were cultural Buddhists rather than religiously practicing ones. Many of them also admitted that their family members usually went to pagodas for praying, but they did not follow Buddhism. Some of them thought that their families were following Buddhism, but when asked about official documents such as their identities, family registers and other official documents, they all responded that they were never recorded as following any religion. The offender’s profiles confirmed this, as they were all noted as ‘not following any religion’. However, what this should not ignore is the fact that the Vietnamese still have religious beliefs and they may loosely consider that they were Buddhists. That was the reason Vo (2005) stated that nearly 80% of Vietnamese consider themselves Buddhists, while the National Investigation of Population and Housing (General Statistics Office 2009) claimed that only 7.9% of Vietnamese people were Buddhists. However, during the interviews the offenders did not acknowledge the role of religion and its effects on their lives.

Regarding places of residence, there seemed to be a roughly even balance of participants who come from rural areas (including semi-rural) and those from urban areas with 53.4% and
46.6%, respectively. However, as there were several differences between those living in rural areas, another group labelled ‘semi-rural area’ was created. While the distinction was evident between urban and rural areas, the semi-rural areas needed to be distinguished. These semi-rural areas were evident when participants lived in areas deemed rural yet still close to an urban area. In several cases, the participants’ parents worked as farmers, but still lived very near the centre of a town or city. The category of being resident in a semi-rural area was therefore used. Several offenders were born in rural areas, but did not live there. They had moved to an urban area to live and work and there offended. They were consequently listed as residing in urban areas. This suggests the effects of dislocation that took place in many parts of Vietnam, may be a risk factor for youth offending.

Reports of the MPS have no information about the ethnicity, religion and area of residence of juveniles. However, in his study, DM Nguyen (2014) analysed four reform schools across Vietnam and has provided background information about these areas. He found that 90.5% of the juvenile offenders who were in a reform school had a Kinh background while only 9.5% came from an ethnic minority. These proportions were different in other parts of the country as in the north of Vietnam these rates were 76.7% and 23.3% respectively. While this present study focused on prisons in the north of Vietnam, the percentages of young offenders from ethnic minorities in the sample of this study were smaller than those in Nguyen’s study. However, DM Nguyen (2014) focused on juvenile delinquents in reform schools (those not prosecuted and incarcerated) while this present research focused on the young offenders in prisons.

Regarding religion, DM Nguyen (2014) found that in the north of Vietnam, 92.6% of the juvenile offenders surveyed in his sample did not follow a religion, a figure consistent with the sample in this study. He also found a balance between the rates of youth crimes in urban and rural areas of 51.0% and 49.0% respectively in the whole country. However, in the north of Vietnam, these rates were 42.0% and 58.0% respectively, highlighting that the proportion of young offenders from rural areas was relatively higher than that from urbanised areas. Similarly, the offenders from rural areas (including semi-rural) in the sample of this research were also greater in number than those from urban areas.
4.6.2 Family Formation Profiles

The family formation profile of the offenders is shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Family Formation Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intact family 35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken family: Parental Abandonment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken family: Divorce/Desertion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrupted family: Death of one parent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most participants came from intact families with both parents still living (66.7%) while ten others (33.3%) came from broken family environments, including three cases of parental abandonment (10%) and five cases of divorce/desertion (16.7%), and two other cases of disrupted family due to the death of one parent (6.6%). These participants were at higher risk of being involved in offending due to the lack of parental supervision and care. However, this did not necessarily mean that those from intact families were at a lower risk of offending. Many of those in this profile had a poor relationship with their families, though they lived with both parents and so many participants experienced poor parental involvement and poor parent-child relationships. Those from intact families were sometimes subject to conflict and violence within the family. In cases where domestic violence or physical abuse were involved, the risks of offending seemed to be even higher for the participants. Several participants had run away from home and were not living with their parents before committing their crimes. Phuong (Case 18) left his family for several years and sought employment in Hanoi. Even though his parents searched for him and persuaded him to come back, he never returned home until after committing his crime, just before he was arrested.

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35 Family with both parents living together. However, in many cases, the participants came from intact families but they experienced significant conflict and violence within their families.
The above general information about the offenders’ profiling is significant for understanding the life history of the young offenders as it establishes the context for understanding the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the profiles of the young offenders participating in this study, including types of conviction, the number of convictions, sentencing, age at interview and age at conviction, family formation, education background, ethnic background, religious affiliation and place of residence. These profiles were compared with official reports to identify differences and similarities between this study and those reports. The findings suggested that the profiles were richer than that of the official reports. Moreover, in generating data from the set of interviews more complex data were found than that from police interviews. These profile features were important in understanding the general information about the offenders as well as the risk factors for their offending as traced in the following chapters.

In general, the young offenders participating in the research committed various types of crimes and some of them had committed more than one offence. Their involvement in offending differed in so far as most committed offences for the first time while others were previously involved in criminal activities. Two participants had been previously incarcerated and one was sent to a reform school as a consequence of their criminal activities before they were convicted and incarcerated again. Several others were also involved in criminal activities prior to their conviction although dealt with by the terms of the Law of Administrative Violation Handling.
Chapter Five  
Individual and Family Risk Factors 

5.1 Introduction 

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present data generated from the surveyed sample concerning the risk factors for youth offending in the domains of individual, family, school, peer and other social (community) influences. Chapter Five focuses on a discussion of the individual and family risk factors identified in this study. Individual risk factors are usually the direct factors influencing youth involvement in offending, though these factors may be subject to influence by various risk factors in other domains. The identified individual risk factors will be discussed in this chapter, including mental and physical issues specific to the interviewees; the experience of childhood trauma; lack of empathy; risk-taking, aggressive and violent behaviour; hyperactivity, impulsiveness and lack of self-control; physical abuse; and substance abuse. 

Other family risk factors have a bearing on youth offending. These include child-rearing methods, family conflict and inter-parental domestic violence, parental substance abuse together with criminal parents and other family members, disrupted family contexts, remarriage and several other family features. These family risk factors are complex, influencing not only the likelihood of youth offending but also reinforcing other individual risk factors. Together, the constellation of individual and family factors formed an environment inside the family, which seemed to have had the most direct impacts on young people, thereby exacerbating the risk of their offending. 

5.2 Individual risk factors for youth offending 

Criminal potential has been said to involve the interaction between the individual and the environment (Farrington & Welsh 2008, p. 37). One could argue that the interaction between the individual with the family environment and the social environment (peer, school and community) would provide an environment of increased likelihood of offending. Therefore, individual risk factors are among the most significant factors, and they deserve prominence when investigating the risk factors for youth crime.
In this study, numerous individual risk factors were identified from the thirty case studies. Aggressive, violent and risk-taking behaviour among the participants; physical abuse; substance abuse; low self-control; and involvement with other illegal activities were among the most common risk factors. Table 5.1 records these factors and their frequency of occurrence.

**Table 5.1: Individual Risk Factors and Their Frequency of Occurrence (N = 30)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seq. No.</th>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aggressive and violent behaviour</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Risk-taking behaviour</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of empathy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Involvement in other illegal activities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Low self-control</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nicotine</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs(^{36})</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total - Substance abuse</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience of childhood trauma</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Restlessness/hyperactivity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Difficulty with concentration</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of legal knowledge(^{37})</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Physical health problems</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mental health issues(^{38})</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{36}\) At least three other offenders were suspected to be involved in drugs use although they denied being so.  
\(^{37}\) These participants appeared to have limited knowledge about laws and regulations, or at least, they could not foresee the danger and seriousness of their activities.  
\(^{38}\) Only one offender was officially diagnosed with mental health illness, but many others might also have had mental health issues as a result of the experience of trauma, physical abuse, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse and online games and the internet influences. This will be discussed below.
5.2.1 Mental and physical issues, experience of childhood trauma and lack of empathy

5.2.1.1 Mental health issues

Among the sample, three participants had physical health issues (10%), such as childhood operations, but these problems did not play significant roles in their offending.

Regarding mental health concerns, there was only one participant officially diagnosed with a mental health disability following a severe injury sustained in a motorbike accident (Trung – Case 26). In this case, Trung committed an act of raping a child. His psychological state seemed to be a significant factor, given his explanation that he was strongly influenced by pornography as well. However, in several other cases, in which the participants were engaged in online games or drug abuse, suffers of domestic violence or physical abuse, mental health problems seemed to be manifest though it was absent in official reports. This would suggest an absence of detail in official documentation on offenders in Vietnamese penology and prison administration. Several offenders who were engaged in violent online games or illicit drugs admitted suffering delusions after using drugs or playing games for an extended period, and becoming more daring and violent as a consequence (Van – Case 28). According to the joint inter-rater assessment, at least five other participants (16.7%) also experienced problems with mental health due to online games, drugs or a sense of being abandoned.

5.2.1.2 Lack of empathy

Many participants displayed a low level of empathy, which might be a significant risk factor for their offending, especially in cases of serious and violent crimes. Throughout the 30 cases, 23 participants (76.7%) had shown a low level of empathy in their regular activities and/or when committing their crimes. While most (17 participants – 56.7%) exhibited levels of low empathy when committing their crimes, only six others showed a lack of empathy in their daily activities, but not in committing their crimes. A further 15 participants showed a lack of empathy in both their regular activities and when they committed their crimes (50%).

5.2.1.3 Experience of trauma

Four types of trauma exposure were identified among juvenile offenders in previous studies, namely, (1) physical or sexual abuse in childhood; (2) an episode that threatened death or severe injury; (3) witnessing events that involved death or serious injury to another person;
and (4) involvement in gang violence (McMackin et al., 2002). These issues were also evident in most cases in this research. However, only two types of trauma are dealt with in this section, namely, threats to the life of, or severe injuries to, the participant, and witnessing other people’s deaths or serious injuries. Other trauma types did not arise in the context of this study, or else will be deferred for later discussion.

Among the 30 participants, nine (30%) were identified as having been exposed to trauma. Seven participants had experienced threats to their lives or serious injuries (23.3%). One participant had witnessed severe injuring of others (Giang – Case 8) and another experienced both types of trauma (Hai – Case 12). Giang witnessed his older sister being stabbed over thirty times with a pair of scissors, while Hai was nearly killed in an accident, which led to the death of his closest friend when a container truck crashed into them while they were crossing a road after school. Among the participants who experienced threats to life or serious injuries, the reasons varied and included accidents, being physically abused or being attacked by others.

5.2.2 Risk-taking, violent and aggressive behaviour

5.2.2.1 Risk-taking behaviour

In this study, risk-taking behaviour proved an important risk factor for youth offending. It was exhibited in 24 cases (80%), especially in the cases of perpetrators of serious and violent crimes. In these cases, the offenders usually committed their offences in a violent and aggressive manner, which led to serious injury or damage. Moreover, these offenders usually did not consider the seriousness or gravity of their crimes. It meant that they ignored the consequences though they understood the illegality of their activities and the legal charges they might face.

In many cases, the participants revealed a tendency for taking risk before they committed their offences. Their risk-taking behaviour might be assumed to have played a major role in their involvement in offending, a point identified as a most significant risk factor (Farrington & Welsh, 2008, p. 49).

Trong (Case 24) said that he never considered the consequences of engaging in fighting, but he did not think that it was risk-taking behaviour.
I do not think that I am not daring. However, all the people who knew me always said that I was a risk-taker.

(Trong – Case 24)

Moreover, risk-taking behaviour was exhibited in the way the participants committed their offences. The offenders, especially those who committed violent crimes, usually showed high levels of risk-taking when committing their offences. They usually used violence or dangerous weapons, which caused serious injuries to the victim. This was demonstrated in the cases of murder, robbery, causing public disorder and intentionally inflicting injury on other persons.

The data also revealed that in the cases in which the participants used drugs or alcohol, their risk-taking behaviour was even more evident than usual. Normally, when the participants used drugs or alcohol, they were significantly affected (and they might have lost their self-control), thereby, becoming greater risk-takers. This was seen in Case 5 (Duc), Case 9 (Gioi), Case 10 (Han), Case 11 (Hoang), Case 12 (Hai), Case 18 (Phuong), Case 28 (Van) and Case 30 (Xuong).

5.2.2.2 Violent and aggressive behaviour

Violent and aggressive behaviour was also a significant risk factor, which appeared in many cases in this research, especially cases of serious violent crimes. The young people who were potentially violent and aggressive usually showed their violence in committing their offences. In these cases, the offenders usually exhibited a high level of violence, resulting in property damage and injury to the victim. In other cases, however, the damage was not extensive, the activities of the offenders also illustrated their violent and aggressive behaviour.

Throughout the 30 cases, 25 participants were identified as having exhibited violent behaviour before they committed the offences, or had been involved in prior violent conduct (83%). Nineteen participants (63%) exhibited violent and aggressive behaviour in committing their crimes. These included the crimes of murder, robbery, intentionally inflicting injury on other persons, robbery by snatching, raping a child, illegally stockpiling and using military weapons, resisting officers in the performance of their official duties and causing public disorder. Several of these participants committed more than one crime. It is also important to note that most of these participants had demonstrated their violent and aggressive tendencies
before they committed their crimes. Some of them were processed under the Vietnamese Law of Administrative Violation Handling.

Diep (Case 4) proved to be one of the participants with the greatest pre-offence tendencies towards violence. He was involved in fighting with others on a regular basis, and he had been in trouble with the police several times before being arrested.

\[ I \text{ was regularly involved in fighting and I had been arrested by the communal police several times. I was once processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling because of that.} \]

(Diep – Case 4)

Duc (Case 5) was even incarcerated for two years for the crime of snatching when he was seventeen years old. However, after release, he became re-addicted to heroin and committed another snatching crime, causing the death of a young woman.

\[ I \text{ had committed many acts of snatching. The victims usually fell, but they were all fine with minor injuries... I was shocked to hear that she had died because of my crime.} \]

(Duc – Case 5)

Gioi (Case 9) committed murder and robbery when he attempted to kill a motor taxi driver (xe om) to steal his possessions. He and his accessory were extremely violent and they tried in vain to kill the driver.

\[ I \text{ did not think much at that time. I just knew that if I did not kill the driver, we would be arrested soon. Thus, both of us stabbed him until he was unconscious. However, he was lucky to be alive.} \]

(Gioi – Case 9)

Similarly, Khang (Case 13), Son (Case 20) and Tung (Case 27) also exhibited extreme violence when trying to kill their victims, given that they all attacked with weapons and strong physical actions. In other cases, many participants also exhibited a high level of violence and aggression.
The participants involved with substance abuse also exhibited an increasing level of violence in their behaviour. This problem was shown in the cases of Duc (Case 5), Hai (Case 12), Phuong (Case 18) and several other cases. Moreover, online games engagement and games addiction seemed to increase the participants’ violent behaviour, as was the situation with regard to Cu (Case 3), Diep (Case 4), Duy (Case 7), Phuc (Case 16), Phong (Case 17) and Case 28 (Van), all being engaged in violent online games and violent behaviour.

5.2.3 Hyperactivity, impulsiveness and lack of self-control

5.2.3.1 Impulsiveness and lack of self-control

There is a close relationship between impulsiveness and lack of self-control. That is the reason White et al. (1994, p. 93) concluded that impulsiveness was equivalent to lack of self-control (see Zimmerman, 2010, p. 302). Therefore, these two factors are discussed together in this section. In this study, lack of self-control seemed to be a dominant individual risk factor appearing in 20 of the 30 cases (67%). While most participants presented a low level of self-control in their behaviour, not all had exhibited it in their criminal activities. However, in many cases, this factor played a significant part. Though some did not admit that they lacked self-control, most acknowledged they were impulsive, especially when committing their crimes.

Anh (Case 1) and Trung (Case 26) both committed the crime of raping a child. Their circumstances were different. Trung experienced mental health problems after a serious accident when he was small. However, they were both affected by pornography, which might have significantly influenced them in committing their crimes. (Hald & Malamuth 2015; DM Nguyen 2014). During the interview, Anh (Case 1) repeatedly stressed that poor self-control, and being stimulated by pornography, were significant for his offending.

I felt very stressed and uncomfortable when coming home after watching porn videos.
I did not intend to rape the little girl, but when she followed me into the kitchen, I could not control myself ... I was afraid, but I just did it.

(Anh – Case 1)

In other cases, both Duc (Case 5) and Hoang (Case 11) were drug addicted before committing their crimes. It is very clear that the issue was not ‘control’ so much as desperation in
addiction. It was similar in the cases in which the participants were involved with drugs and alcohol abuse when the level of self-control seemed to be even less in evidence due to the adverse effects of drugs and alcohol. This suggested a mutual relationship between lack of self-control and substance abuse among the offenders, which significantly increased the likelihood of their offending.

Hai (Case 12) attacked the police when he was stopped for not wearing a helmet when riding his motorbike from a party. He also stressed that lack of self-control was the primary reason for his offence, though he was intoxicated prior to the incident.

\[\text{Although I drank much on that day, I did not think that alcohol was the main reason for my offence. I knew that I was impulsive and I could not control myself well. I had foreseen the consequences, but did not expect that I would resist the police.}\]

(Hai – Case 12)

Giang (Case 8) also exhibited a lack of self-control. After the fight with the other group ended, he returned home to take the shotgun and come back to shoot at that group. He admitted that he realised the seriousness of his activity, but he could not stand being attacked by that group.

\[\text{I had never been beaten seriously like that. I needed to show them that I was not the one they could bully. So, I went home to get the gun. I could foresee that I would be punished, but I could not stand it.}\]

(Giang – Case 8)

In other cases of murder and intentionally inflicting injuries on other persons the offenders also showed a very low level of self-control, such as Phuc (Case 16), Phong (Case 17) and Phuong (Case 18). Nguyen (Case 15) even resisted his father, which caused his death. This showed an extremely low level of self-control.

5.2.3.2 Hyperactivity

Hyperactivity, which includes restlessness and poor concentration, has been identified as a risk factor for youth offending (Bor, McGee & Fagan 2004; Hawkins et al. 2000; Mednick,
Baker & Carothers 1990; Shader 2001). Instances of both restlessness and poor concentration appeared in this study. Some participants exhibited one or the other; others, both.

Restlessness appeared in eight cases in this study (26.7%) such as Case 3 (Cu), Case 7 (Duy), Case 8 (Giang), Case 18 (Phuong) and Case 23 (Tri). Cu (Case 3) expressed his interest in fighting as a way to satisfy his need to be ‘doing something’. He explained how he could not stay in the same place for a long time.

*I always wanted to do something else, especially fighting with others. I usually bullied, teased and fought against other people.*

(Cu – Case 3)

Phuong (Case 18) also admitted that he enjoyed teasing and annoying other people because he felt very uncomfortable when having nothing to do.

*I was very restless when I was in school. I enjoyed annoying others by yelling or smoking in the class. When I did not have anything to do I went to other classes to tease others, which normally ended up in fighting.*

(Phuong – Case 18)

In terms of difficulty in concentration, eight participants (26.7%) said that they could not concentrate on studying or doing other things, especially over an extended period. This was significant in their poor ties to the school, persistent truancy and dropping out of school, but none thought that it was related to their offending. The effects of this factor of low concentration levels should be mediated through other risk factors such as poor bonding to the school or dropping out of school.

5.2.4 Substance abuse

Substance abuse was also a common risk factor in this study. Twenty participants (66.7%) appeared to have been highly engaged with several kinds of substance abuse, such as drinking and using drugs. In several cases, no direct relationship between substance abuse and criminal activity was noted. However, substance abuse might have affected other risk factors such as low self-control, risk-taking, violent and aggressive behaviour, which in turn increased the likelihood of youth offending.
Eleven offenders (36.6%) were involved with alcohol abuse, including those who committed crimes under its effects. The behaviours of these participants seemed to be strongly influenced by alcohol. Several participants committed offences after heavy alcohol consumption, such as Hai (Case 12). This issue also appeared to be significant in other cases, such as Case 9 (Gioi), Case 10 (Han), Case 11 (Hoang), Case 18 (Phuong), Case 26 (Trung), Case 28 (Van) and Case 30 (Xuong) when these participants committed their offences after drinking.

Regarding drug abuse, six offenders (20%) admitted that they had used drugs and at least three other participants (10%) were involved with drugs (according to their personal prison files) but did not admit it. The types of drugs were various but most of the participants were involved with heroin, methamphetamine (ice) and Methylene Dioxy Methamphetamine (Ecstasy or MDMA). It was important to note that drug involvement might significantly influence self-control and behaviour among those offenders. However, only two participants (Duc – Case 5 and Hoang – Case 11) admitted that they were addicted to drugs while the others claimed that they just used drugs for recreational purposes and they were not addicted. Duc and Hoang had been incarcerated twice and they both admitted that drug addiction was the main reason for their offending. Other offenders, such as Gioi (Case 9), Long (Case 14), Phuong (Case 18) and Van (Case 28), denied being addicted but they did admit to knowing the adverse effects of using drugs.

Van (Case 28) engaged with several types of drugs and explained that cannabis could induce hallucinations while also removing any sense of fear. Such lack of self-control would be exacerbated when taking ice.

*You will fear nothing after using cannabis. But when using ice, you will see that it is much stronger than cannabis. You will not be able to control yourself. You will become extremely adventurous and you can attack others straightaway if you are told to do that.*

Van (Case 28)

Additionally, several participants in this study also stressed the adverse impacts of drug abuse. Long (Case 14) admitted that he could play games through the night without feeling tired after using ice. Phuong (Case 18) also said that he usually felt very positive after taking ice and usually gambled or went to a bar or karaoke, dancing and singing during the night.
After using ice, we could stay up for the whole night for gambling or singing and dancing in a karaoke without feeling tired at all. But the next day would be terrible, as you would feel very uncomfortable, painful and tired. Everything would be wonderful again after taking some more ice. Therefore, I continuously used ice from day to day.

(Phuong – Case 18)

Among these participants, Duc (Case 5) and Hoang (Case 11) had committed their crimes when they were craving drugs and needed money to buy the drugs, so substance abuse was the direct risk factor for their offending. In the other cases, though the participants were not convicted under the immediate effects of drugs, it should be noted that substance abuse had significantly affected their mental health and behaviour and this ought to be a contributing factor for their violent behaviour or involvement in offending.

5.2.5 Involvement with other illegal activities and legal awareness

5.2.5.1 Involvement with other illicit activities

Twenty-one participants (70%) were involved in other illicit activities before their conviction for offences. These ranged from stealing from their family or neighbours, bullying or fighting other people, or committing criminal acts, such as theft, burglary, gambling or inflicting injuries on other people. This was in agreement with Hawkins et al. (2000) when they stated that males who were involved in other forms of antisocial behaviour, such as stealing and destruction of property, self-reported delinquency and drug selling were at a greater risk of later violence.

Among those previously involved in illegal activities, two participants had been arrested and prosecuted for their crimes before they had been incarcerated again at the time of the interview (Duc – Case 5 and Hoang – Case 11). Another had been sent to a reform school because of his criminal activities (Duy – Case 7). Six other participants (20%) had also been dealt with under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling because of antisocial activities while several others had never been prosecuted or handled though they were involved in antisocial behaviour as well. Phuong (Case 18) participated in a gang and criminal activities for several years before he was arrested.
I had joined my group two years before I was arrested. All the members were involved in the activities of the group and we usually fought other people. We attacked others, which led to serious injuries several times. However, we were all fine, as my ‘big brother’\(^{39}\) could solve the problems after that.

(Phuong – Case 18)

Early involvement in criminal activities was significant for later offending by the young people, as clearly identified in this study, regardless of whether they were previously prosecuted or processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling or never been involved in the justice system.

5.2.5.2 Legal awareness

In terms of legal knowledge, it was found in previous studies that lack of legal awareness\(^{40}\) was a risk factor for youth offending when the offenders committed crimes because of a lack of understanding of the law (NT Dang, 2007, 2011b; DM Nguyen, 2014).

In this study, though this factor was not as common as some other risk factors, five participants (16.7%) spoke of a low level of legal awareness when committing their crimes. A lack of legal understanding might be a significant factor, which affects one’s behaviour, especially with young people who lack awareness, social experiences and life skills, and the problem of legal knowledge is compounded. Therefore, they may be involved in antisocial behaviour or criminal activities without foreseeing the possible consequences. These circumstances presented a degree of ignorance of the legal regulations.

In general, the problem of inadequate legal knowledge usually occurred with those participants who lived in poor rural areas or came from an ethnic minority community. Among the 30 cases, three participants (10%) were from ethnic minority groups (Case 1, Case 2, Case 30) and all had highlighted a lack of legal awareness. In other situations, the offenders knew that their activities were illegal, but did not appreciate the seriousness of their activities and the nature of the legal consequences they might face. In these cases, they thought that their activities were minor and would never result in prosecution. Thang (Case 22) explained his crime of robbery as ‘just asking for some money without using violence’.

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\(^{39}\) The participants in this study usually use the word ‘brother’ with the meaning of a comrade.

\(^{40}\) The situation in which the offenders do not know the regulation related to their criminal activities, which results in their offending
However, another striking issue which became apparent in this research was the persistent contempt of legal regulations, which was consistent with the findings of DM Nguyen (2014) when he pointed out that ignoring legal regulations – the offenders committed offences despite understanding the regulations – was also a significant factor for youth offending. At least 22 participants (73.3%) knew that they were committing criminal acts. These participants seemed to hold the law in contempt. They looked down on the legal regulations, or the legal enforcement seemed not to be effective in preventing them from committing crimes. Coupled with other risk factors, an indifference to the consequences of rule breaking increased the significance of the crimes committed. This was in agreement with DM Nguyen (2014) when he concluded that 89.5% of the young offenders understood the illegality of their activities but offended nonetheless. This raised alarm amongst the authorities in dealing with youth offending (DM Nguyen, 2014, p. 162). It was unclear if the youths were encouraged to commit their offences because they knew of the probable lightness of the punishment, but it seemed that most of the participants were very audacious when committing their offences. The point has been made by many Vietnamese commentators that not only did the light sentence not prevent the offending, it even encouraged young people to commit crimes, especially the serious offences (H Nguyen, 2014; Thai, 2009). Such authorities argue that the sentence was not strict enough and the offenders were not afraid of being punished, thus urging stiffer penalties in response to their crimes. That is to say, these people feel that harsh sentences would discourage crime.

5.3 Family risk factors

Many family-related risk factors were also identified in this study. Interestingly, several family risk factors were dominant, appearing in all 30 cases. These included poor family bonding; low levels of parent involvement, poor parent-child relationships; inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision. Moreover, this study showed that factors such as family conflict and inter-parental violence, disrupted family, separation from parents and running away from home were significant as well. These factors are presented in Table 5.2.

5.3.1 Child-rearing methods

According to Farrington and Welsh (2008), several types of child-rearing methods could be relevant to youth offending. These included lack of parental supervision; lack of discipline or parental reinforcement; emotional parent-child relationships and the degree of parental
involvement with the children. In this study, the absence of adequate child-rearing methods seemed to be the most common risk factor not only in the family domain but also amongst the overall risk factors, while these factors appeared in all the case studies. The issues of child-rearing practices significantly depended on the way parents treated their children, resulting in appropriate supervision and good and stable parent-child relationships. Low levels of parental involvement, poor parent-child relationships, inconsistent discipline and lack of parental supervision were identified in all 30 cases, regardless of age at conviction, the crimes committed and family circumstances.

In terms of parental involvement and parent-child relationships, most participants admitted that they did not have close relationships with their parents although several admitted that they loved their parents (Anh – Case 1, Khang – Case 13 and Trung – Case 26). In several cases, the participants even had serious conflict with their parents, which resulted in their running away from home or becoming involved in games, the internet or gangs. Particularly in the cases of parental abandonment or divorce, the offenders might have totally lacked any relationship with their parents, such as Duy (Case 7), Han (Case 10), Phong (Case 17) and Sang (Case 19). In the cases of intact families, the problems of parent-child relationships and lack of parental involvement were also present. Most of the participants admitted that their parents rarely or never joined them in their study or other activities, and nor did they assist in solving the problems they faced. The most common reason was economic: the parents were too busy with working to earn income and did not have time to spend with the children.

All participants felt that they lacked parental supervision. Though some said that they felt their parents cared about them, they actually admitted their parents were essentially uninvolved, knowing little of their school, study, activities and their friendships. In many cases, the parents only came to learn about the participants’ criminal activities when arrested.
Table 5.2: Family Risk Factors and Their Frequency of Occurrence (N = 30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seq. No.</th>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor family bonding</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low level of parental involvement</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Poor parent-child relationships</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inconsistent discipline</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of supervision</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Family conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict and inter-parental violence</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total – family conflict</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Running away from home</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By parents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total – physical abuse</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Disrupted family; broken home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Death of parent(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental abandonment^41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total – disrupted family</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Parental substance abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs^42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total – parental substance abuse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Criminal parents and family members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total – criminal parents and family</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Remarriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One parent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total – parental remarriage</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Young mother, teenage parents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Large family size^43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^41 There was one case of both parental abandonment and the death of parents (Duy – Case 7)

^42 No participants admitted that their parents were involved with drugs, but this did not necessarily mean that none of the parents was actually engaged in drug use. This is of course a serious ethical and legal issue so the participants might not tell the truth to avoid possible negative consequences for their parents.

^43 A family with many children may experience poor economic conditions.
Duong (Case 6) admitted that he pretended to obey his parents when they told him not to join with ‘bad friends’. It was not a warning he heeded:

*I was still engaged with my friends and I gradually got into using drugs with them. Of course, my parents never knew that until I was arrested. They did not even know that I smoked.*

(Duong – Case 6)

Duong explained that his parents only focused on work and that was the reason they did not care. Similarly, Cu (Case 3) also pointed out the relationship between income earning and parental non-involvement with the children. He described his parents as ‘knowing nothing’ about him at school, as they only cared about earning money. He even asked other people he met at the internet agencies to pretend to be his parents and sign related documents given by his teacher.

*With my father’s fake signature, I was allowed to come back to the class and my parents never knew about my issues. They only detected the fact at the end of the school year and, of course, I was then seriously beaten by my father.*

(Cu – Case 3)

Socioeconomic background was also significant in many other cases, such as Case 15 (Nguyen), given that his father was alcohol addicted:

*There was almost no supervision in my family at all. My father only drank but did not work and my mother was always busy with working for feeding the whole family. Therefore, both of them never knew anything about the children.*

(Nguyen – Case 15)

In other cases, when they realised that the children were involved in criminal or antisocial activities, the parents tried to stop them, but they usually used inconsistent regimes of discipline/punishment which may have in turn increased the risk of their children’s offending (see Farrington & Welsh, 2008). The issues with inconsistent discipline appeared in all thirty cases, but the types of discipline were various. On the one hand, several participants admitted that their parents or family members spoilt them, suggesting an absence of a firm discipline
regime. This lax discipline made them more selfish, dependent on and less obedient to their parents, posing a risk factor for their later offending (DM Nguyen, 2014, p. 87). However, the most common type of discipline applied to the offenders in the family was a harsh beating. Several participants admitted that their parents used very harsh discipline to make them fear or feel ashamed to compel obedience:

*When I was highly involved with the internet and games, my father used harsher punishment with me. He even forced me to take off all of my clothes and walk home naked from the internet agency. I felt ashamed with that and I hated him.*

(Cu – Case 3)

It was also very common that parents used corporal punishment with the children, hoping that they would obey them completely. Half of the participants admitted that they had experienced harsh physical punishment by one of their parents, or both. However, corporal punishment only exacerbated the negative effects on the participants – they did not change but became even more resistant to their parents.

For Phuong (Case 18), his father treated him violently and expelled him from his home. Phuong regularly stole and sold his father’s things to gain money for games. Eventually he left home and never returned, though his parents searched for him.

*After taking my father’s motorbike to a pawn shop, I went to an internet agency to play games. He then found me and took me home, tied me to the staircase and beat me severely. Then he pushed me out of the family and I did not come back until I was arrested.*

(Phuong – Case 18)

Han (Case 10) lived with his grandparents, but was beaten regularly by his grandfather and uncles, as he did not obey them.

*...Finding me in an internet agency, they immediately beat me there. Then they took me home and tied me to a big tree with a rope and left me there for hours, but I did not change after that... They beat me again and again.*

(Han – Case 10)
5.3.2 Child mistreatment

Child mistreatment is closely related to child-rearing methods. This includes child abuse and neglect, both of which appeared in many cases in this study. Being mistreated might significantly increase the likelihood of youth involvement in offending (Bender, 2010; Hollist, Hughes & Schaible, 2009). While sexual abuse was not detected in any case, physical abuse was common among participants. Neglect was also a striking feature in this study, which might have a significant correlation with other risk factors in increasing youth offending.

5.3.2.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse in the family was a common risk factor, which appeared in 15 of 30 cases (50%). Thirteen participants were physically abused by their parents, while one was abused by both his parents and other family members and one was seriously abused by his grandparents (Han – Case 10). Many participants admitted that they were violently beaten by their parents (mostly the father) when they made mistakes, or even when apparently nothing wrong had transpired (Nguyen – Case 15 and Phuc – Case 16).

Phuong (Case 18) said that his father could use anything he found to beat him, which led to serious injury.

*My father usually beat me so seriously that I could not walk, stand or even sit on my bottom after being punished. He could use anything he found to beat me, such as bamboo sticks, wooden bars and even the machine belts he brought from the machines in his workshop.*

(Phuong – Case 18)

Similarly, Vu (Case 29) also stressed his father’s violence toward him when he did not let anyone stop him from beating Vu.
My father usually used bamboo sticks or electricity wires to beat me. He took me into the bedroom and closed the door before hitting me. Nobody could come in to stop him, while I could not escape. He only stopped when he felt that the punishment was enough.

(Vu – Case 29)

Physical abuse increased the likelihood of involvement in later offending (Bender, 2010; Fagan, 2005; Farrington & Welsh, 2008; Stewart, Livingston & Dennison, 2008). Thirteen participants (43.3%) experienced physical abuse in the family and subsequently committed violent crimes, such as murder, intentionally inflicting injury on another person, robbery, snatching and causing public disorder. Although the extent of each participant’s violent behaviour might differ, it tended to reflect the physical abuse and violent behaviour experienced by the offenders. In general, those who were physically abused tended to be violent in turn, and the more they were abused the more violent they seemed to become.

However, the reaction of the offenders to the physical abuse also varied among offenders. Some participants became violent toward the parents and family members who had physically abused them (namely Han – Case 10 and Nguyen – Case 15). Both Han and Nguyen were prosecuted for the crime of murder and, in both cases, the victims were their family members. They both blamed their own violence because of the violent behaviour of their family members toward them. They explained they had reacted in self-defence. Though there were only two cases in which the participants attempted to physically abuse their family members, this suggested the significant influence of physical abuse on these offenders’ behaviour.

Many other participants became violent after being physically abused (mostly by their fathers) but preferred not to resist their parents and the family members (e.g. Cu – Case 3, Phuong – Case 18, Tri – Case 23 and Tung – Case 27). However, their reaction to such violence was to externalise it and inflict it on other people. All these offenders then committed violent offences. Though several did not admit that they became violent because of being physically abused, a correlation could be observed between being physically abused and the violent behaviour of these participants. This was consistent with work by Farrington and Welsh (2008) concluding that physical and sexual abuse was a significant risk factor for youth offending regardless of age, gender and ethnic background.
Most participants acknowledged that corporal punishment by their parents could not change them, but it in fact did increase their risk-taking and violent behaviour. It also increased the resistance toward their parents. Several participants admitted that corporal punishment did not have any altering effect on them as it was meant to instil fear. These participants usually became more involved with antisocial activities such as running away from home, fighting and bullying others. Interestingly, one participant (Son – Case 20) admitted that he committed the crimes of murder and robbery as he was afraid of being beaten by his father.

*I could still remember my father’s terrible violent punishment toward me. I was so scared of being beaten. So I did not dare to ask him for money to pay the fee again. I decided to kill the victim to steal her money.*

(Son – Case 20)

5.3.2.2 Child neglect

Among the thirty participants, eight offenders (26.7%) were separated from one or both of the parents at a certain period in their childhood. Each suffered varying degrees of parental neglect, with abandonment constituting the most extreme manifestation. Offenders from disrupted families, and from families where one (or both) parents had remarried, seemed to be more likely to have experienced this issue.

Most participants who lived in disrupted families had experienced neglect. Duy (Case 7) and Han (Case 10) were among the participants who experienced the most serious issues concerning neglect. Both had been abandoned. While his mother left Han with his grandparents and moved to a distant location in another province, Duy was also given to his adopted parents when his mother left. Both of them knew nothing about their fathers, while their mothers hardly ever returned to visit them.

*My mother left me on a train when I was five years old and she never came back to pick me up. Though I did not remember much about the past, I still clearly remember it.*

(Duy – Case 7)

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44 Families which were disrupted because of the death of a parent or because of divorce.
Phong (Case 17) also experienced abandonment by his parents when they both went abroad to work, another case of an economic cause and disruption:

*I strongly felt being abandoned when seeing other students with caring parents. Only my grandmother cared about me. I am not sure if my parents still remember that they have a son. They just focus on earning money, but did not care about me at all.*

(Phong – Case 17)

However, the issue of neglect appeared in not only broken homes but also intact families. Several participants with a functioning family also reported that they were neglected by their parents, especially for economic reasons. In these cases, the participants were usually taken care of by their grandparents or older siblings. Anh (Case 1) and Trong (Case 24) both lived with their grandmother from the time they were small, as their parents worked far from the village and they could not take care of the children.

*When I was about three years old, my parents went to work far from my village. I had to stay with my grandmother. After my younger brother was born, they left home again and I had to take care of my younger brother.*

(Anh – Case 1)

Trong also described the experience of being neglected by his parents when he was a small boy.

*My parents were so busy and they did not visit us regularly. They sometimes came back and left the next day. I missed them a lot.*

(Trong – Case 24)

Both parents neglected Tam (Case 21). He explained his antisocial behaviour as an attention-seeking reaction to his parents ignoring him.

*They did not care about me. I tried to attract their attention by doing bad things. But, they did not understand. They only got angry and beat me more seriously.*

(Tam – Case 21)
5.3.3 Family conflict and inter-parental physical violence

Inter-family conflict was amongst the most common family risk factor evident in this study. Family conflict occurred in 23 cases (76.7%). This included twelve cases of family conflict (40%) and eleven cases of family conflict with inter-parental violence (36.7%). Interestingly, all the cases of inter-parental physical violence occurred in families with high levels of family conflict.

In terms of family conflict, there were conflicts between parents and children and between the parents. However, in most of the cases, the conflict happened inter-parentally. There were various reasons for the conflict between the parents in the family, such as poverty, differences in their characteristics or other issues related to substance abuse or illegal activities. This once again suggested that the social and economic stresses had significant influences on the family conflict and other family risk factors. Many participants admitted that they experienced serious arguments between their parents during their childhood. The offenders who lived in families with a high level of conflict admitted that the conflict in the family not only influenced the relationship between their parents, but also between parents and children. It also affected parental involvement with the children, parental supervision and discipline in the family.

Vu (Case 29) argued that he was not bonded to the family because of the conflict between his parents:

My parents did not get on well with each other. They rarely talked to each other, or, if they did, they would soon start arguing. I always felt the pressure in the home and that was the main reason I did not want to be at home.

(Vu – Case 29)

More seriously, many cases of family conflict and arguments in the family had turned into inter-parental violence, especially in the case of parental substance abuse or involvement in illegal activities, such as Case 8 and Case 11.

Giang (Case 8) confided that his father was heavily involved in gambling, which significantly increased the conflict between his parents:
... he sold almost everything in the family to pay his debt and the conflict between my parents increased dramatically. My father usually shouted at my mother and he sometimes even beat her when she complained about him. They then rarely talked to each other and I did not talk to them either.

(Giang – Case 8)

Adversely, Hoang (Case 11) indicated that the reason for the parental conflict in his family was the difference in his parents’ characteristics.

My father was very determined and paternalistic, while my mother also had a strong character. So, they usually argued with each other but could not solve the conflict.

(Hoang – Case 11)

In this study, inter-parental physical violence was a common risk factor and the violent environment in the family was closely related to later offending by the children, in particular for those who then committed violent crimes.

Regarding inter-parental physical violence, eleven participants (36.7%) had witnessed violence at various levels between their parents. Most then became violent in their daily behaviour or when committing their crimes.

My father seemed to be more violent after drinking, and my mother also resisted him when being beaten. I had witnessed my parents fighting or arguing with each other many times and I was very upset with that. I just wanted to get out of the family.

(Cu – Case 3)

Case 15 proved to be the worst example of violence in the family as the interviewee, Nguyen, killed his father after his mother and the children were repeatedly beaten by his father.

...my father never wanted to discuss anything with my mother but just shouted at her, beat her and threw her out of the family without any reason. The children did not dare to talk to him to avoid being beaten as well.

(Nguyen – Case 15)
In all cases of inter-parental violence, the fathers were the primary agents of violence against the mothers, which suggested a problem of gender violence. In these cases, all the participants admitted they could do little to intervene. Some of them admitted that they had to ignore the violence in the family environment, though Nguyen (Case 15) deemed the case of domestic violence so serious that he ended up killing his father, who had been a violent and abusive man.

5.3.4 Poor bonding to the family and running away from home

The problems related to minimal parental supervision, lack of discipline, lack of parent-child relationships, low parental involvement, family conflict and inter-parental violence also led to the issue of poor family bonding among the participants. All the participants in this research expressed the matter of poor ties to the family, though the strengths or weaknesses of the bond varied considerably.

Khang (Case 13) presented a case of very poor bonding to his family and parents, though he did not have conflict with any family member:

*I usually got up late in the morning after my parents and my brother went to work. In the afternoon, I went out to join friends. In the evening, I came back home for dinner before going out to join my friends again. I only came back home when my parents had gone to bed. Therefore, I had very limited time with my parents and my family.*

(Khang – Case 13)

There was a common line of action among these participants when they were, or became more estranged from their families. They tended to seek out other activities or other people to substitute for the lack of family ties. Some of them were engaged in or addicted to the internet or online games while others preferred joining gangs or being involved with their antisocial peers when they did not feel connected to the family.

Tam (Case 21) admitted that he rarely joined his parents even for meals. He usually went out late at night to play games and only returned home in the early morning. He slept until noon before getting up to have lunch, but he never had lunch with his parents.
My parents sometimes returned home for lunch and they called me to have lunch with them but I never joined them. They then got bored with that and never called me again. This became a habit and I sometimes even avoided having dinner with my parents.

(Tam – Case 21)

The poor ties to the family also seemed to have a significant correlation with running away from home, often a consequential result of alienation. Therefore, the less bonded to the family were the participants, the more likely that they ran away from home.

In this study, sixteen offenders (53.3%) admitted that they had at least once run away from home before they were convicted. Among them, several participants left the house and were away for several days before their parents were able to find them or they returned home of their own accord. Some offenders also admitted that they regularly ran away from home, proving elusive to their parents, as illustrated by Case 4:

"It was very easy to deal with my mother when I did something wrong. After she beat me, I just left home and went somewhere for several days. She immediately ran around to look for me, but she could never find me.... When I returned home, she did not dare to mention my faults again. Running away was an effective way to resist my mother."

(Diep – Case 4)

Interestingly, running away from home was not always prompted by family conflict environments. For instance, Tam (Case 21) first ran away from home for forty-eight consecutive days without informing his family when he was only fourteen years old, as he was encouraged by his friends to play online games.

Particular participants even stressed that they could not bear the living environment in the family and they felt much more comfortable and relaxed when living away from home. Long (Case 14) and Phuong (Case 18) both left home and lived on their own before being arrested. Phuong left home when nearly 14 years old and went to Hanoi to join a gang, working as a prostitute protector\(^\text{45}\) (a pander) until he killed another man and was arrested at the age of 17. He admitted that his parents had continuously searched for him, but he avoided meeting

\(^{45}\) This term is translated from the word ‘bao ke’ in Vietnamese, which has the same meaning as a pander or a pimp.
them, as he did not want to return home. For nearly three years after leaving for Hanoi, he only returned home once, at his mother’s begging insistence. He left the next day, finding life too boring in his rural residence place in comparison with that in Hanoi:

*I always felt that living with the family was very boring, as I had nothing to do. I needed to go somewhere to avoid the boredom at home. When going to Hanoi, I never wanted to come back home anymore.*

(Phuong – Case 18)

Long (Case 14) also exhibited weak ties to his family, given that he did not get on well with his stepmother:

*I was in serious conflict with her, while my dad was rarely at home. Therefore, I usually ran away from home and spend the whole night in the internet agencies. I saw others using ice there and I started using ice after that.*

(Long – Case 14)

Do (2000) argues that running away from home might result in children’s association with delinquent peers and groups, leading, in some cases, to criminal acts. Those interviewed in the sample indicated that this might be the case, demonstrating patterns of running away from home which led to their involvement with delinquent friends and criminal activities. Moreover, it increased the likelihood of contact with such delinquent groups, some of which also facilitated acts of crime as well.

### 5.3.5 Other family risk factors

#### 5.3.5.1 Broken family and remarriage

In terms of disrupted families and broken families, there were nine cases (30%) wherein the participants had experienced this situation. These included instances occasioned by the death of parents, instances of divorce and abandonment. Among them, two offenders (6.7%) experienced the death of their parents (Duc – Case 5 and Duy – Case 7). Trung (Case 26) was

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46 Family disruption could be the consequent of many issues including health issues and conflict in the family, but in this thesis, disrupted family means the family disruption because of death of a parent and it is sometimes used to replace the term ‘broken home’.

47 Families that have split or separated for various reasons, but in this study broken family could be because of either divorce or death of a parent.
not counted as coming from a disrupted family, even though his father was deceased at the time the interview was conducted, dying in an accident after Trung’s incarceration.

Among all thirty cases, there were five cases of divorce (16.7%). In most of the cases, the participants continued living with their mother after the divorce. Some of them stated that they lived with their fathers for some periods while others admitted that they had no information about their father, as the fathers never visited the children after the divorce. However, there was a similarity between these offenders when they all admitted that their impression about their fathers was negative, except Long (Case 14). Hai (Case 12) described his father as ignoring him after the divorce.

*I lived with my mother and her new husband after the divorce. My father only visited me twice after that. He had not called me for years before I was arrested, so… I think that he did not know that I was in prison. He had to take care of his new wife and other children, so he might have forgotten me.*

(Hai – Case 12)

Similarly, Phuc (Case 16) also stated that his father did not care about the children after the divorce. More seriously, Sang (Case 19) even stated that he considered his father as dead because his father ignored his children.

*I could not understand what he thought. He did not care about any of us. So I always considered myself an infant, whose father had died a long time ago.*

(Sang – Case 19)

Therefore, it could be clearly seen the significant relationship between broken home and parent-child relationship, parental involvement and parental supervision and its impacts on young people.

Remarriage and step-parents might have adverse effects on young people and increase the risk of youth offending (Pagani et al. 1998). In this study, among the cases that involved broken homes and disrupted families, six cases of remarriage were noted, accounting for 66.7% of the disrupted families and 20% of all the cases. Interestingly, among the five cases of divorce and two cases of parental death, six cases (85.7%) of remarriage suggested an unsurprising close relationship between broken home and remarriage.
Among the cases of remarriage, three participants were well treated by their step-parents (50%) including Duc (Case 5), Hai (Case 12) and Sang (Case 19).

*My stepfather was much better than my father in terms of treating me. He was very kind and he never shouted at or beat me. I could feel the care and the love my stepfather gave to me. So I felt sad, lost and frustrated when he died because of lung cancer.*

(Sang – Case 19)

Hai (Case 12) stressed that his stepfather, who was even much better than his father, loved him like his own son.

*My stepfather treated me as his son. He even cried when seeing me in court, while my father did not appear there. I felt very sorry for my stepfather but not for my father. Facing my stepfather when released will be very difficult for me.*

(Hai – Case 12)

Two other participants did not mention their fathers’ new wives as they did not have a chance to live with their fathers after the remarriage, while only one participant admitted that he was in serious conflict with his stepmother (Long – Case 14). He argued that his stepmother always said bad things about him to his father, which significantly increased the conflict between them.

*...the conflict got worse and I decided to run away from home. My father searched for me and asked me to come back, but the conflict between my stepmother and myself could not be resolved. Then I left home permanently, before I engaged with using and selling ice.*

(Long – Case 14)

Irrespective of conflict with step-parents, all the participants from the families where remarriage occurred admitted that their step-parents did not have a significant influence on them. Duc (Case 5), Hai (Case 12) and Sang (Case 19) admitted that their step-parents were too kind to them and tried to avoid being in conflict with them. Very lax discipline and a low
level of supervision were applied in their homes, especially by their step-parents. Therefore, the participants were more likely to be involved in criminal activities.

*She was very caring about me and she never shouted at me. I guessed that she did not want me to hate her, so she tried her best to prevent conflict between us. I was free to do anything I wanted and she would never intervene. She never attempted to ask me where I was going or what I was doing…*

(Duc – Case 5)

5.3.5.2 Parental substance abuse and criminal family members

Several participants admitted that their fathers were involved with smoking and drinking; none admitted that their parents were involved in drug abuse. Moreover, as the information about drug abuse was limited due to ethical considerations, 48 no case of parental drug abuse was detected. Therefore, only nine cases of parental substance abuse (30%) were identified, which accounted for 30.0 per cent of all cases. All of the cases were related to alcohol abuse, and the abusers were all fathers. All the participants from families with parental substance abuse admitted that their fathers usually became much more violent and aggressive after drinking, which in turn resulted in an increase in family conflict and domestic violence. This suggested a strong relationship between parental substance abuse and family conflict and domestic violence.

*I used to adore my father as an intelligent and well-behaved man. But, he changed significantly after drinking and I was extremely disappointed about that. He could not control his speech and activities when he drank. I did not want to listen to him even when he was not drunk and we rarely talked to each other.*

(Hoang – Case 11)

Similarly, Phuc’s father was involved with drinking, which in his mind significantly increased the conflict and violence in the family.

48 Asking about drug-related issues may result in legal problems with the participants’ parents.
My father drank regularly, but the problem was he usually became more violent after drinking. He tried to find a reason for shouting at my mother and the children. If she resisted he would immediately beat her.

(Phuc – Case 16)

In Case 15, according to Nguyen, violence and abusive behaviours were important factors for his offending.

He did not need to eat or drink anything, just alcohol. You would never find any tea in my family, but only alcohol. However, it was strange that he did not sleep after drinking. He even talked and shouted more after that. He seemed to be stronger and more energetic when beating us.

(Nguyen – Case 15)

Four participants had parents, who were involved in criminal activities (13.3%). Interestingly, this was similar in family orientation to parental substance abuse – all the criminal parents were fathers. This again suggested paternal influence over sons in terms of offending. Criminal parents have been identified as one of the most significant risk factors for youth offending and Farrington et al. (2001) even stated that arrest of the father was the most significant predictor for a boy’s conviction.

Giang (Case 8), Phuc (Case 16) and Phuong (Case 18) all had fathers who were involved in gambling. The fathers spent all the money they could earn on gambling and they even sold things in the family to pay their debts because of gambling. However, none of them had ever been arrested and prosecuted because of gambling, though gambling is illegal in Vietnam. This suggested a problem of law enforcement with this type of crime in Vietnam as clearly it was not properly policed.

There were also four cases where the offenders had criminal family members and relatives (13.3%), including one instance of a criminal grandfather (Co – Case 2); one case of a criminal sibling (Thang – Case 22) and two cases of criminal uncles and cousins. In Case 28, Van admitted that he did not obey his parents or any other people except for his uncle (his father’s older brother), a ‘big brother’ 49 who was ‘famous’ in not only his area but also in

49 The head of a gang.
many other provinces. Besides, he also had very close relationships with his cousins (his uncle’s children) who were also involved in ‘secret activities’ as he explained. He implied his uncle and cousins were involved in gangs and he always showed his respect when talking about them. Farrington et al. (2001) also concluded the arrest of not only parents and siblings but also other family members like uncles, aunts and grandparents might be a predictor of crime for young boys. Therefore, those participants whose parents, siblings and relatives were involved in criminal activities were at a higher risk of being involved in youth offending.

5.3.5.3 Young parents and large family size

Several other family risk factors might have contributed to the participants’ offending. In several cases these factors included having a young mother or teenage parents and large family size. Large families have been identified as a risk factor for youth offending (Farrington & Welsh, 2008; Maderthaner, 2005), while a young mother is assumed inexperienced and thus has been identified as a risk factor for youth offending as well (Arthur, 2006; Public Safety Canada, 2009). However, several authors have argued that these were not sufficiently direct risk factors for youth offending, but were mediated by other risk factors, such as unemployment, child-rearing methods, overcrowded housing and lack of supervision and neglect (Bartol & Bartol 1999; Farrington & Welsh, 2008; Siegel, Welsh & Senna, 2003). Farrington and Welsh (2008) also suggested that teenage motherhood was significantly related to poverty, poor childrearing methods and lack of social support, this in turn increasing the likelihood of youth involvement in offending.

In this study, five cases involved young parents (16.7%). In most of the cases, the mothers were younger than the legal marriage age. These cases usually occurred in ethnic minority communities or rural areas. For example, in Case 1 both of Anh’s parents were juveniles when they married while in Case 2, Cu was born when his mother was less than 16 years old and he himself was also married when he was just over 13 years old. Such instances pointed to the serious issue of child marriage in Vietnam, especially in ethnic minority communities (Anh 2012; CD Dang & Hoang 2013; T Nguyen 2012; Vu 2009). Incidents of early marriage have been common in Vietnamese history (CD Dang & Hoang 2013). Although the Vietnamese government tried to resolve this issue, child marriage is still common in the

50 Criminal activities, but Van did not want to mention it directly.
51 The family with many children, which might affect the economic situation of the family.
mountainous and rural areas (Thuy 2014), in particular among ethnic minority groups in Vietnam (Anh 2012; Dang & Hoang 2013; Jones, Presler-Marshall & Van Anh 2014; T Nguyen 2012). Studies have shown that early marriage may cause severe problems with young people when they are not biologically nor psychologically old enough for the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood (Anh 2012). Therefore, children born in the family of early marriage may be at higher risk of behaviour problems, including youth offending.

In terms of family size, some offenders said that they were born into a vast family structure with many children; as a result, the labours of their parents were scattered, and their focus on the children limited. Large family size of families was present in at least three cases (10%), and this seemed significant in the participants’ involvement in offending.

In Case 5, Duc was the third child in the family and his mother died shortly after giving birth to him. His father then remarried and had two more daughters with his second wife. This necessitated him taking any available job so that he could earn money to take care of his family of five children. As a consequence, Duc was neglected and experienced a lack of supervision. He became involved with delinquent friends, drugs and illegal activities before his first conviction. Similarly, in Case 12, after Hai’s parents divorced, both remarried and each of them had three more children. Hai went to live with his mother and his stepfather, who already had four children before remarrying. Hai was consequently neglected as both his stepfather and his mother had to take care of their other children while his father also had to take care of his new children. He confided that his father had not called him for years before he was arrested, and he inferred that his father did not know that he had been convicted and arrested.

In this study, though it seemed that the problems associated with large family size and young parents might not directly influence the young offenders, it was important to note that they were still significant risk factors for the participants’ involvement in offending in several cases. Case 12 was a particular instance when Hai stated that his father, mother, and his stepfather were all busy taking care of their enlarged families. The impact of these factors might be mediated by other risk factors such as poverty, child-rearing methods, discipline and parental supervision in contributing to their offending. This was in agreement with Farrington (1997, p. 387) when he argued large size family had a close relationship with other family risk factors, which predicted the probability of later offending.
5.4 Conclusion

In Chapter Five, the findings were presented relating to the individual and family risk factors for youth offending as discerned from the life histories of the young offenders. It is important to note that these risk factors arose from within the family (as distinct to other social risk factors outside the family related to school, peers and neighbourhood) and might significantly impact upon the young offenders. As the family is considered the first socialisation agent and the strongest support for young people (Maderthaner 2005), the risk factors from within the family might even have had a more significant impact on the young people and their involvement in offending.

Regarding the individual risk factors, there was a consistency in the research findings with previous studies about youth offending in Vietnam and other countries. Many individual risk factors identified in previous research also had significant influences on youth offending in this study. These factors were mental health issues, lack of empathy, the experience of trauma, risk-taking, aggressive and violent behaviour, lack of self-control and impulsiveness, hyperactivity, substance abuse and involvement with other criminal activities. Among them, risk-taking and aggressive behaviour, lack of self-control, substance abuse and the involvement with other illegal activities were among the most significant predictors for probable later offending among the young offenders. Ignoring of regulations and the consequences of their offending were other issues having a significant impact on the young offender’s decision to commit a crime. While the lack of legal knowledge has been mentioned elsewhere as a risk factor for youth offending, ignoring legal regulations seemed rather new but it was important to note that this factor might increase the likelihood as well as the seriousness of youth offending in Vietnam.

In terms of family risk factors, child-rearing practices, child maltreatment, family conflict and inter-parental physical violence, poor bonding to family, parental substance abuse, criminal parents and family members, broken families and remarriage, were all identified as predictors of probable youth involvement in offending. These factors not only increased the risk of youth offending but also reduced the positive impact of family on the young people and made them less resilient to the potential influence of other risk factors. Child-rearing methods (parent-child relationship, parental involvement, discipline and parental supervision), child maltreatment (physical abuse and neglect), and family conflict and inter-parental violence, were the significant risk factors identified in the family domain in this study.
Chapter Six
Schooling and Peer Risk Factors

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings regarding the risk factors for youth offending related to schooling and peers. Previous studies have identified numerous risk factors in the school and peer-related domains, which might have increased the likelihood of involvement in offending (Haines & Case 2005; Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005; Hawkins et al. 2000). Many of these factors were also identified in this study, though the extent to which each affected the likelihood of youth offending differed. In this chapter, these factors discussed and their impact examined, as well as the relationship between them and other risk factors contributing to youth offending.

6.2 School risk factors

Many school risk factors were identified in this study, including academic failure, poor bonding to school, negative attitudes to the school, truancy, grade retention, dropping out of school, school violence and others factors related to school management. These factors appear in Table 6.1 reflecting their presence in the life histories of the 30 offenders.

6.2.1 School violence

The presence of school violence seemed prevalent in all of the 30 cases of the interview sample, with interviewees admitting to having witnessed or experienced it in some form. More seriously, many participants admitted that the level of school violence could have increased other risk factors in their offending, such as learning to become more aggressive and violent, dropping out or being expelled from school – which all in turn increased the likelihood of their offending.

Twenty offenders (66.7%) were also identified as being directly involved with instances of victimisation and being bullied in the school. Among them eleven participants said that they had bullied others (36.7%); four admitted to having been bullied themselves (13.3%) and five others were involved in victimising others and being bullied (16.7%). In total, sixteen participants admitted that they had victimised other students (53.4%) and nine participants (30.0%) were bullied at their school.
Importantly all these participants stressed that bullying and victimisation in the school involved violence. This led to several negative consequences, such as an enduring a fear of attending school, dropping out of school, or becoming violent and aggressive and intending to avenge the violence perpetrated against them.

According to Phuong (Case 18), violence in his school was relentless, and influenced students to drop out.

_Fighting in my school was so bad. Some students did not even dare to come back to school after having fights with others. They were afraid that they would be victim of retaliation. Some dropped out of school after fighting with other students. Others had to move to other schools to avoid being attacked. The communal police came to the school several times, but nothing changed._

(Phuong – Case 18)
The point was also noted in Case 4, with students leaving the school after altercations.

On that day, I and three other friends fought a group of over ten students in my school. They chased us and we had to jump into the river to avoid being attacked. Then I called my ‘brothers’, and we prepared weapons for revenge. But none of the other group dared to come back to school the next day as they knew that they would be attacked by my group in retaliation. Six of them then never returned to school. The rest had to ask their parents to go with them to apologise to us before they could come back to school.

(Diep – Case 4)

The situation of retaliatory violence in Case 4 was also common in other cases in this study, suggesting a significant cycle of violence and retaliation in the school environment.

The interview sample revealed the prevalence of school bullying and physical violence (e.g. Case 4, Case 21, and Case 28). A high number of those in the sample who suffered such behaviour usually became violent toward others. Several participants stressed that they were negatively affected by bullying, which consequently resulted in risk-taking activities and violent behaviour. They first tried to resist others who bullied them by preparing weapons or seeking assistance. They then became violent and started to bully and attack other students in their school. One instance of this is Diep (Case 4), who highlighted the cycle of violence when he bullied others in retaliation for being bullied.

I was bullied by a group of grade eight students when I was in grade six. I tried to resist them, but as I was younger and smaller, I was seriously beaten. I wanted to take revenge. Several years after that, when I had joined my group, I met these boys again and they were seriously beaten by my group without daring to resist. I also bullied other smaller students as well.

(Diep – Case 4)

Similarly, Van (Case 28) blamed victimisation as the primary reason for his dropping out of school. He was usually attacked by a group of students from another village in the school grounds or on the way home from school, and made it a habit of beating him every time they saw him. When he was about to finish grade six, at the age of twelve, he decided to vengefully
‘fight the final battle’. Elaborate preparation took place: the call to two cousins, assembling knives and swords to attack the other group. The case witnessed police intervention. Both Van and some others were processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling.

That group also prepared knives and steel water pipes to fight with us, so someone, I do not know, called the police just before the fight started. We were then dealt with under the Law of Administration Violation Handling. I left school after that, as I knew that they would never leave me free once I returned to school.

(Van – Case 28)

In many cases, knives and other weapons were used in the fighting between the students, some of whom were injured as a result.

Fighting occurred almost every day in my school. Students usually took weapons like wooden bars and sticks or metal water pipes into the school to fight. One of my friends was seriously beaten by another group and he had to be at the hospital for two weeks. I was also sometimes beaten by other students and groups, but I attacked others as well.

(Tam – Case 21)

Phuc (Case 16) also stressed the need for preparing weapons for reasons of self-defence, resisting and attacking others during altercations in his school. His description has little to do with matters of education, and much to do with matters of survival.

We know that our ‘enemies’ also prepared weapons, so my friends and I usually took foldable knives and pieces of water-pipe to school so that we could use them when needed. We just hid them in our school bags or on our motor scooters and no one could find them.

(Phuc – Case 16)

Van (Case 28) went so far as to bring a knife to his class with the intention to attack another student when he was only eleven years old.
When I was in grade five I had a fight with a student from another class. I then prepared a knife and went to his class to resolve the conflict. However, when I was attacking him, I found a long wooden ruler and used it as the weapon, so I did not need to use the knife. He was seriously injured in the head and taken to hospital after that.

(Van – Case 28)

Interviewed participants even stressed that violence did not merely occur among the students in their school, but between the students within the school environment and those from other schools. A notable point was the influence of individuals from outside of the school. Several participants admitted that they were beaten by parents and other family members of the students who were in conflict with them.

*I usually beat other students in my class and most of them did not retaliate. However, some called their parents and other adult family members to the school to take revenge. They slapped or punched me in the face. I might be in severe pain, but I was too small and weak to escape or resist... I sometimes felt ill for several days after being beaten by them.*

(Duy – Case 7)

Participants interviewed described a recurring phenomenon: that of external involvement by gangs in the schools and that it was very common that a student called his group to support him in fighting against others. This militant atmosphere engendered the need to form groups in self-defence, spanning a range of sports and communal endeavours. Several offenders said that they joined groups of students who had the same interests (e.g. soccer), while others admitted that they gathered in groups based on similar backgrounds (e.g. the village of residence) and the mechanism of protection against bullying by students from other villages.

*If not joining a group, you would be alone when being attacked. Other members in the group would help you solve the altercations. I could take revenge on the older students who used to bully me only after joining my group.*

(Diep – Case 4)
Acceptance of such a violent environment was a point noted in the interviews. Trong (Case 24) stressed that the parents even got used to school violence and they seemingly accepted it as a part of school life.

I joined a ‘strong’ group in my school. When I was in grade eight, I beat a classmate in the head with a wooden bar, which caused him serious injury. His parents then did not dare to attack me or ask for punishing me. They were afraid that their son would be attacked again by my group as a result. They just persuaded me not to beat him again. Nothing happened to me as a result of that.

(Trong – Case 24)

School violence was a significant risk factor for youth offending in this study, given that it increased other risk factors for youth offending related to school connectedness, such as low school bonding, dropping out of school, alienation and isolation from peers.

6.2.2 The problems with the school policies and system

Although many school risk factors have been mentioned in previous studies, it was interesting that previous studies of school risk factors tended to ignore the relevance of management. Shader (2001), who argues that school suspension and expulsion might increase antisocial behaviour among students while applying serious punishments to students, could also promote rather than curb misbehaviour. Wasserman et al. (2003) also conclude that schools are significant in not only the socialisation of children but also the development of offending. They stressed that children from a poorly functioning and operated school, usually had problems with academic achievement and were more likely to be influenced by delinquent peers. This, in turn, promoted antisocial behaviour and youth offending (Gottfredson 2001).

In this study, there were several issues related to school management, which might have had a significant impact on increasing the likelihood of youth offending. These included the relationship between the school and families in educating and managing students, handling school violence and other issues in school and the appropriateness of the education system. Problems of school management and the lack of cooperation between families and school in managing students appeared in all thirty case studies (100%). Despite variations, all the participants admitted that the school management was poor and several even stressed that the
administration of schools was not effective enough to protect the students and ensure a safe school environment. Students were not offered an environment in which to thrive. They were vulnerable and feared for their safety. This issue was subsequently confirmed by several service officials.

6.2.2.1 Discipline management and the role of the teachers

Another issue related to school management was the way discipline was handled in the school; the school response to any negative problems, such as academic failure, truancy, dropping out of school and school violence was not effective. School discipline seemed not to be strict enough to deal with these issues. Therefore, students were not well managed at school and they faced a high risk of being involved in truancy, bullying, and in being bullied, as well as other antisocial activities.

There were over 50 students in my class, so the teachers sometimes might not realise if someone was absent. But, I do not think that they did not actually realise that I was not present. I was sometimes caught playing truant but the teachers only wrote down my name in the logbook of the class. However, I was not punished or required to write reports about my absence and I could return to the class the next day.

(Duong – Case 6)

In several other cases, the teachers seemed to ignore, or even avoided being involved with the students or helping them solve their issues. In some cases when the participants were troublemakers in the class, it seemed that the teachers preferred them to be absent rather than helping them to solve the problems. This demonstrated a very negative relationship between teachers and students in the school, which significantly contributed to the increase of school disconnectedness.

I played truant regularly and my parents did not know about that. It seemed that the teachers did not care, or at least they ignored me when I was absent from the class. So, I did not have many problems with that.

(Duong – Case 6)
6.2.2.2 Grade retention

In this study, five offenders (16.7%) were retained – held back in the same grade in successive years because of academic or behavioural problems. As most presented a low level of academic achievement or other behavioural issues, they were not qualified to transition to a higher class. Being retained seemed to be a significant risk factor for these participants, as all admitted that they felt isolated by the new and younger students after being retained. This then led to a more negative attitude and other problems among these students (GE Anderson et al. 2002; Meador 2016; Nagin et al. 2003). Grade retention did not help them improve their academic achievement or solve the behavioural issues, but it might have worsened their attitude toward school and led to their subsequent dropping out of school.

When I was in grade eight, I was heavily involved with games and I did not pass the final exam. I then decided to leave school. But my mother and sister encouraged me, so I went back to school and started grade eight again. But, I only played truant or annoyed the teachers and other students. Two months after coming back to school, I was expelled for teasing a young female teacher in a lesson.

(Sang – Case 19)

Interestingly, all five participants who were retained then dropped out or were expelled from school. This finding was consistent with the conclusion that grade retention was a most significant predictor of later dropping out of school (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002; Meador 2016; Xia & Kirby 2009). All of these participants admitted that it was difficult for them to fit in with the younger students in their new class after being retained. They also stressed that they felt isolated by other students in the class, which seemed to have increased the likelihood of their involvement in victimisation, fighting, truanting and subsequent dropping out of school.

All the students in my class were younger and smaller than me, so they looked at me differently. They seemed to keep a distance from me. I got angry with them and I beat them up more regularly. However, it only made them stay further away from me.

(Giang – Case 8)
Official reports on youth offending in Vietnam only mention a high level of dropping out of school among the young offenders, but there was no data given for grade retention among the juvenile offenders and its relationship to dropping out of school and subsequent youth offending. The results here suggest that revision of this policy is in order.

6.2.2.3 Response to school violence and students’ safety at school

The seriousness of school violence suggested a lack of administrative engagement. In several cases, students were at risk of beatings by others, but no effective efforts to protect them seem to have ensued. Most schools did not have effective measures to prevent school violence despite the incidence of school violence in all thirty cases. The participants said that the teachers did not know about the conflict or violence in the school, as the students were unsupervised during the break time, and before and after school. Strategies were not in place, and schools seemed uninterested or unclear about how to pursue them. The interview sample shed light on this. This is different from school management in other countries. For instance, all schools in Australia have supervising teachers during lunch/break time, known as ‘on duty’ teachers.

Many participants admitted that students did not tell the teacher about the issues of violence and being bullied in school, as they were afraid of being attacked in retaliation. The sense of desperation was evident in the interview sample. Most felt that little would be done to alleviate the threats. They usually solved the altercations by themselves, or suffered the bullying. The school essentially became a self-policing environment in which students became violent in the absence of adult proper supervision.

In Case 7, Duy faced trouble from both the school environment and violence from external factors. This was proof of violence among the students in the school, as well as violence from people outside the school toward the pupils. Some of this violence came in the form of family involvement, with adult members assisting the child members in perpetrating the violence, thereby compounding the situation. As Duy (Case 7) graphically noted, fighting occurred in his school almost every day.
Fighting between students occurred in my school every day. It was very common for the students to call their adult family members, relatives, or other people to school to beat up other students. I was beaten by these adults several times. In most cases, the principal and the teachers did not know about the fighting and did nothing to intervene... I never saw any guard at my school either.

(Duy – Case 7)

All participants admitted that the safety of the students was not well maintained at school, as most did not have guards or other staff to ensure their security and safety. In most cases, each school usually had one or two guards who were responsible mainly for guarding motorbikes and bicycles, while security in the school rarely concerned these guards. In this context, several participants said that they felt unsafe when going to school and at least four participants (13.3%) admitted that it was the main reason for them dropping out of school due to victimisation they experienced.

The picture painted by Van (Case 28) is one of aggression and violence, where guards fear to intervene:

There were several gangs in my school and they were involved in fighting regularly. The guards were also afraid of these groups, so they did not dare to intervene when there was fighting at the school. I was also a victim of school violence when being bullied for years before I dropped out of school. The fear of being bullied again was the most significant factor in my dropout.

(Van – Case 28)

In Case 28, it was also stressed that teachers and guards were afraid of the antisocial students and gangs in the school, discouraging them from intervening when instances of school violence took place. Giang (Case 8) claimed that the guard in his school was threatened by the students, and tended to avoid conflict.
The guard witnessed violence in my school regularly but never did anything to prevent it. He was so afraid of the vicious students and their groups that he did not dare to intervene. I knew that he had been threatened by gangs in my school and that might be the reason he did not dare to get in conflict with them.

(Giang – Case 8)

This issue significantly suggested that schools had become places lacking proper and effective policing, and places where learning was no longer occurring. Even one of the participants, Trong (Case 24), attacked a male teacher before being expelled from the school. Though such attacks on the teachers are not very common in Vietnam, they do take place in the school environment.52,53

6.2.2.4 Family-school relationship

Another significant issue related to both school and family was the relationship and need for cooperation between school and families in managing and educating students. There was indeed, an evident lack of cooperation. Much of this was affected by a lack of knowledge of the study habits of their children of parents. This seemed to apply in all thirty cases in this study. While most parents seemed to be busy with the task of earning money, they left their children for the school to manage. The school could not, and did not, actually fulfil this task. More importantly, it was very rare that there was any connection between the teachers and the parents in managing the students. There was a minimal communication between teachers and parents. Therefore, several parents only knew about their children’s issues at school when the students eventually dropped out of school or even at the point when they had been arrested. This issue was closely relevant to the parental supervision and parental involvement with the children, such as in Case 4.

52 http://www.tienphong.vn/xa-hoi/binh-phuoc-hoc-sinh-danh-thay-giao-bat-tinh-940748.tpo (A teacher became unconscious because of being beaten by students)
53http://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/cong-dong/hoc-sinh-danh-thay-giao-vo-mui-ngay-truoc-cong-truong-3206578.html (Students beat a teacher in front of school gate, leading to broken nose)
I lived with my mother after my parents divorced. I was highly involved with games and billiards and I played truant regularly. My mother did not know about that, as she was not informed. She never asked me about study at school either. Only when I decided to leave school did she know about the issues.

(Dieg – Case 4)

Tri (Case 23) even copied his father’s signature to convince his teacher that his parents knew about his issues in school.

When I made mistakes at school, I usually had to write a report about that and promise not to repeat the mistake. These documents also needed my parents’ signatures before I could come back to the class. I then forged my father’s signature to sign the reports, as I knew that my teacher would never contact my parents to check. Therefore, I was allowed to come back to the class, and my parents never found out about my problems.

(Tri – Case 23)

Similarly, Cu (Case 3) was involved behaviour problems at school, and his teacher always required him to submit a paper reviewing his mistakes, with his parents’ signature if he wanted to come back to class. This posed little problem to Cu, who went to the kiosks near the school to ask the owners to sign the paper impersonating his father’s name. Both parents and teachers were oblivious to this arrangement, again suggesting an absence of cooperative communication between pupil, teacher and parent.

In general, it was found from this study that the functioning of schools in educating and managing students, as evidenced in the life histories, was much compromised, as the teachers usually did not have any effective measure to solve the problems related to violence in the school, the conduct of the students and other issues. Moreover, the discipline in the school was lax while the cooperation between school and families was very limited. This was significant in causing critical harm and posing risks to students, which might have increased the likelihood of their offending.
6.2.3 School disconnectedness

A number of school risk factors were identified in this study and many were related to the term ‘school disconnectedness’. Connectedness reflects the time that young people spend with, and their attitudes toward others (Karcher, Davis & Powell 2002). Previous studies on school connectedness have stressed the significance of the relationship between students and their teachers and peers on their engagement in studying (Bond et al. 2007). Wilson (2004) also argues that school connectedness is generally related to students’ feelings of attachment and commitment to their school because of receiving care from their teachers and friends. ‘The literature includes a variety of definitions for school connectedness’ (Libbey 2004). These include school connectedness, school bonding, school attachment, school engagement, school involvement and teacher support (Libbey 2004). Though there are differences in the labels, they do share similar constructs of academic engagement, such as belonging, positive attitude to school, safety, teacher support and relation with peers (Libbey 2004).

While school connectedness may work as a protective factor, the disconnectedness to school, on the other hand, could significantly influence students’ attitudes and behaviour. Faulkner et al. (2009) also conclude that there is a strong relationship between school disconnectedness and the decrease in academic performance. The participants interviewed suggested a range of dysfunctional relations to school disconnectedness that might be significant in this study.

6.2.3.1 Low bonding to school and truancy

It has been concluded that those who are not bonded or connected to school are more likely to be involved in antisocial and criminal activities (Bender 2012; Shoemaker 2008; Snyder and Smith 2015). In this study, all thirty participants (100%) felt no strong ties to the school. Twenty-seven offenders (90%) were involved in truancy, though their attitude and attachment to school might have varied. There was a significant relationship between poor school bonding and truancy in that many offenders admitted that they found study very boring and that they preferred playing truant and joining peers, playing games or doing other things outside the school.
I did not see the importance of going to school. I found that studying was very annoying. I went to school every day but not to study. I enjoyed playing football or going to the kiosks near the school with my friends so that I did not have to suffer through the extremely boring lessons in the classroom.

(Khang – Case 13)

Duong (Case 6) was of like mind, finding a greater appeal in frequenting internet agencies or billiard parlours than in school.

Whenever I felt tired and bored with studying, I usually played truant to join others who also truanted like me. We then went to the billiards rooms or the internet agencies. I sometimes even returned home to sleep during the lesson. Sleeping is much more relaxing than study.

(Duong – Case 6)

Hai (Case 12) also played truant regularly while he acknowledged the teachers ignored his truancy.

I often climbed over the wall of the school to avoid being detected when truanting. However, in many cases the teachers did not care about those who were absent like me, as we were all troublemakers. Our absence might be better for those who wanted to study. Thus, I did not have many problems with truancy.

(Hai – Case 12)

The issues of low school bonding and truancy were closely related to other school risk factors presented above, including school discipline and student management, school violence and the safety of students at the school. Hence, the above risk factors had significantly increased the student’s school disconnectedness, given that many of them truanted on a regular basis.

On the other hand, truancy itself was a significant risk factor, as it increased the likelihood that the participants would engage with antisocial peers and in activities, online games and the internet, all of which seem to have negatively affected them in their behaviours and lessened their connection to the school. Phuc (Case 16) admitted that when his teacher did not allow him to join the class, he had more time for playing games and billiards.
On the days of the final exam for one subject, I truanted to play games with several friends and I forgot to come back to take the exam. When we returned to the school, we were not allowed to come in and take part in the exam, as it was too late. I then went back to the internet agency to continue playing games, without caring about the consequences.

(Phuc – Case 16)

6.2.3.2 Negative attitudes to school

Most participants admitted that school was vital for the development of a person. However, that knowledge did not engender any positive attitudes in them regarding their schooling experiences. Several participants even saw school as one of those ‘useless things’. Among the participants, 22 offenders showed a negative attitude to school and study (73.3%). Phuong (Case 18) gave an indicative example of this attitude when he stated that education was not important to him at all.

I never thought that school was important to me. My mother told me that if I did not try to study, I would not be able to find a job to earn a living. However, I did not listen to her. I thought that I could earn my living without much studying.

(Phuong – Case 18)

Several participants demonstrated negativity to their school environments in mocking or attacking the instructing teachers and other students in the school. Several offenders even exhibited pleasure annoying or bullying others at school. Trong (Case 24) was one such example, showing ample enjoyment in being a class distraction.

I was quite distracting at school and I did not want to study. I liked teasing other students and even the young teachers. Sometimes I bullied and beat others just for fun.

(Trong – Case 24)

Trong’s daring was considerable, taking various forms: teasing the female teachers at his school or annoying the communal police officers by using firecrackers. He even had a fight with a male teacher, which resulted in his expulsion from school. Although he had never
before being sent to prison or reform school, he was involved with the police several times for fighting with others.

This theme of distraction and hindering was also found in Phuong (Case 18). He admitted that he was interested in teasing the teachers, targeting female ones.

_I never teased the male teachers, but I teased all the females. I also annoyed others by teasing and beating other students, yelling during the lesson and smoking in class. Some teachers were even so angry with me that they could not continue teaching in my class. I am sure that all the female teachers who had ever taught in my class hated me so much._

(Phuong – Case 18)

Similarly, as well as feeling excited about bullying and teasing other students, a very disruptive Diep (Case 4) was very interested in provoking his teachers.

_I opened a marker pen and poured the white liquid from it onto the teacher’s chair. When she came in and sat down in the chair, her bottom was painted white, but she did not realise it. She then continued the lesson while the whole class continued laughing, but no one told her about the issue. Most students in the class could guess that I did it although they had not actually seen me do it._

(Diep – Case 4)

Similar instances of not respecting the teachers also appeared in several other cases, such as Case 10 (Han), Case 16 (Phuc) and Case 23 (Tri). In the Vietnamese context, such behaviour is deemed unethical. Many proverbs mention the role of the teacher, such as:

‘Com cha, ao me, chu thay; Gang cong ma hoc co ngay thanh danh’

(Dad gives you food, mum gives you clothes and teachers give you knowledge; Try your best and you will be successful one day).

However, this thinking seemed to be obsolete with the sample interviewed in this study. The figures generated here indicate that youth behaviour in actuality may vary from cultural preconceptions. The fact that teachers are fearful for their safety and mistreated by youths has been recorded, especially outside the classroom. Many cases of students violating and
attacking teachers had taken place. This, together with other types of school violence, has become a serious education problem in Vietnamese school and learning environments.

6.2.3.3 Dropping out of school and school expulsion

Dropping out of school and school expulsion are among the most significant indicators of school disconnectedness. From the case studies, sixteen offenders had dropped out of school or been expelled from school (53.3%). Those who dropped out of school or were expelled usually had problems with negative attitudes to school, academic failure, truancy and school violence before they left, which suggest a correlation between these school risk factors.

I was not retained, but I usually joined two mischievous boys who had been retained in my class. Therefore, I was involved in antisocial behaviour and violence more regularly. In the middle of grade 6, three of us left school permanently at the same time, as we felt that going to school was very annoying and no one in the class wanted us to be there either.

(Phuong – Case18)

Tam (Case 21) was also retained in grade six and this was a significant reason for his subsequent dropping out of school. He admitted that he had more problems at school after being retained. He played truant more regularly and he took part in fighting more often. He also admitted that he felt quite isolated by the new students, as no one wanted to engage him.

Six participants (20%) were expelled from school because of their misbehaviour, such as fighting or transgressing the school discipline and rules. Two of them were involved in both dropping out and expulsion from school (Long – Case 14 and Vu – Case 29). Both dropped out before returning. However, they were both expelled from school soon after their return because of violation of school rules. These two cases were also related to the issue of grade retention. On returning to school both Long and Vu had to join younger students at the same lower grade level as when they dropped out, while their former classmates had moved up to a higher class.

I only came back to school as my parents and my aunt encouraged me to do that. However, it was much harder than I had thought. I felt being isolated by other students. Also, I did not really focus on the study, so my marks were bad. I got bored with studying such useless things that I thought I would never use, so I decided to leave school again.’

(Vu – Case 29)

School exclusion was also a problem related to school policies when zero tolerance was applied with students. While such discipline regimes might stop the misbehaviour of certain students it also fostered a sense of disconnectedness from school and the learning process.

6.2.3.4 Academic failure

Previous studies have identified a strong relationship between school disconnectedness and the decline of academic achievement among students (Faulkner et al. 2009). Wilson (2004) also concludes that school connectedness or its particular dimensions could influence a student’s academic performance.

In this study, academic failure was one of the most common school factors noted among the participants, with all thirty offenders (100%) showing a low level of academic achievement. There seemed to be a mutual relationship between school disconnectedness and academic failure. While disconnectedness to school strongly affects academic performance among students (Faulkner et al. 2009), this current study indicated that the failure in academic achievement also significantly increases school disconnectedness. It was evident from this current study that those who did not perform well at school usually felt bored, stressed and even exhausted with studying. Some were not interested in studying from the time they first went to school. Several admitted feeling the strain of studying and an inability to concentrate in class.

Anh (Case 1) admitted that he could never obtain good study results because of concentration issues and he felt that studying was very stressful.
When I first went to school, my study was so bad that my father decided to stop working for several months to stay at home and help me with my study. But, when my parents returned to work again, my study results got worse again. I felt exhausted with the study.

(Anh – Case 1)

Similarly, Duong (Case 6) also admitted that he lacked concentration when studying and he usually forgot everything he had learnt soon after class.

I never got good marks at school, as I was absent-minded. I could not remember the things I had learned. I do not know why, but I did not like to go to school. I could not focus on the lessons as well.

(Duong – Case 6)

Khang (Case 13), however, was only interested in physical education, which was consistent with his statement that he always needed to be engaged in physical activities.

I was always among the lowest achieving students academically in the class. I was not good at any subjects at school except physical education. I did not care much about the results of my study at school. I felt that study was very boring because I did not understand the lessons.

(Khang – Case 13)

Several other offenders used to be good students until they became involved in truanting, school violence, online games, the internet and mixing with antisocial peers, which distracted them from studying.

I used to be a good student in primary school, but my results got worse when I moved to lower secondary school. I was always among the worst in my class. I got bored with going to school as well when my marks were low. So, I left the school after that.

(Gioi – Case 9)

All these participants admitted that they did not want to focus on studying after having problems with their academic achievement. They became less tied to school: most dropped
out of school or were expelled. Poor academic performance provided the background of lack of interest in school, a greater interest in extra-curricular activities (gaming, the Internet) that provided a background for potential youth offending.

6.3 Peer-related risk factors

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that peer-related risk factors are significant contributing factors to youth offending, especially during adolescence (Hawkins et al. 2000; Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Accordingly, the factors of mixing with delinquent peers and gang membership should be considered when investigating the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. From the findings of this study, peer risk factors identified can be seen in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2: Incidence of Peer-Related Risk Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Influence of delinquent peers</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gang membership</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Isolated from peers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Delinquent siblings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding peer-related risk factors, several issues were identified from the case studies, including involvement with and influence by delinquent peers; joining gangs; delinquent siblings and peer isolation. Among them, involvement with delinquent peers and gang membership seemed to be significantly important in the offenders’ involvement in offending, while delinquent siblings and isolation from peers seemed less common.

6.3.1 Influence of delinquent peers

Among the participants, 28 offenders (93.3%) admitted that they had been involved with antisocial peers. Most admitted to being significantly affected by their peers in their behaviour and criminal activities. Several participants even stressed that peer-pressure was the most important reason for their offending; they would not have been punished and incarcerated had they not been involved with them.
The most severe cases of peer influence involved the commission of offences in joint circumstances. In this study, at least 16 (53.3%) participants admitted that they committed their crimes with their peers. These participants usually said that they felt more confident and encouraged when joining their peers in committing their crimes. Gioi (Case 9), for example, made a plan to kill a motor taxi driver, but he did not dare to do it alone.

*I knew that Khoe was in need of money,*\(^{55}\) *so I asked him to join me. He agreed without any hesitation. I would never have dared to commit the crimes if he had not joined me. When attacking the victim, I only followed him in stabbing the driver until he was unconscious so that we could take his money and motorbike.*

(Gioi – Case 9)

Duong (Case 6) was caught by authorities in the act of trafficking a bag of ecstasy (Methylene Dioxy Methamphetamine or MDMA) in the company of his friends. He said that one of his friends gave him the Ecstasy before they went to Hanoi. Duong also explained that he usually carried Ecstasy when going with his friends in his area without being detected and arrested.

*I never thought that I would be arrested because of drug trafficking though I sometimes helped my friends to carry drugs for use. Unfortunately, we were stopped by the traffic police in Hanoi and they found the bag of Ecstasy. The cops also found the tools for using ecstasy when doing a body search on my friends. All of us were arrested and prosecuted for the crime of illegal narcotic trafficking then.*

(Duong – Case 6)

Hoang (Case 11) had two spates of heroin addiction and he was significantly affected by the influence of his peers in both cases. He was addicted to heroin when he joined a group before he was arrested and incarcerated the first time. However, after being released, he soon became involved in another group, in which most members were drug addicted and he relapsed. He subsequently joined them in acts of heroin trafficking and trading.

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\(^{55}\) He did not explain the reason for that at the time of interview, but Khoe was addicted to heroin according to the prison files and he might need money for buying heroin.
They sold heroin for earning money as well. I also needed money, you know… so I joined my friends in the sale of heroin. I was arrested with another friend when we were selling drugs. The other guys in the group were all arrested soon after that.

(Hoang – Case 11)

In several other cases, the participants stated that they felt encouraged and aroused in their peer involvement, even when committing crimes.

We went to another village to help my friend with revenge after he had conflict with some people there. I actually did not know the guys that we were about to attack. I took a steel water pipe with a sharp blade on the top56 while others also looked for weapons. We could not catch the actual men we were searching for as they ran away, but we attacked an innocent man instead, because we all felt aroused and angry...

(Phuc – Case 16)

Xuong (Case 30) also described the feeling of ‘being motivated’ when joining his friends attacking another man.

I did not know why my friends chased the couple. I just followed them in attacking the man without thinking of the reason. I felt motivated to attack that man when seeing others beat him, though I did not have any conflict with him. If the older guys had not chased and beat the victim, I am sure that I would never have committed my crime.

(Xuong – Case 30)

Several offenders even admitted that they felt that they had the responsibility to help their peers to solve their conflict. This involvement then resulted in serious cases of murder or intentionally inflicting injuries on other persons. This was actually the reason for the ultimate sentence with some participants. Examples of this were Diep (Case 4), Phuc (Case 16), Phong (Case 17) and Phuong (Case 18).

56 This tool is usually used for killing pigs
He was my close friend and we usually helped each other when there were fights. Therefore, when he called me to help to solve the conflict, I accepted immediately. I did not have any issues with the victim, but I did not care about that. I just thought that I had a responsibility to help my friend. But the consequence was much more severe than I had expected.

(Diep – Case 4)

Phuong (Case 18) also helped his comrade when they beat and killed another man.

_I worked as a prostitute protector\(^{57}\) in a group with nearly ten members. They were my ‘brothers’ and we usually helped each other in solving the disputes. Therefore, when my ‘brother’ was attacked, I definitely had to help him._

(Phuong – Case 18)

Importantly, many participants admitted that they could see the adverse effects of joining delinquent peers, but they still joined them, often expressing fascination with being in their company. Several even stressed that they preferred being involved with peers much more than staying at home or joining their family members. It seemed that many participants had joined a substitute ‘delinquent family’, which formed a particular community and existence with other people.

_I realised the bad influences of my friends when they were gradually arrested one by one. Most committed the crime of robbery by snatching. I could foresee that I would be involved with criminal activities sooner or later, but I still enjoyed mixing with them. However, I did not expect that I would be arrested so soon._

(Tam – Case 21)

Thang (Case 22) also said that his cousin, who usually planned the robberies and theft that he took part in, was his closest friend. Thang stressed the role his cousin played in his offending several times during the interview.

\(^{57}\) Prostitution is illegal in Vietnam but it still exists in many areas. Normally, prostitutes are ‘managed’ by one or a group of ‘protectors’ and these prostitutes have to pay the protection fee if they want to do this work. The equivalent word in English would seem to be ‘pimps’ or ‘pander’.
I always met up with my cousin and we understood each other very well. I think he had a strong influence on me. I committed crimes with him in all of the cases. He usually gave me money when I needed it. So, when he let me commit a burglary or theft, I was always willing to join him without any consideration. I still consider him my closest friend till now.

(Thang – Case 22)

Similarly, Van (Case 28) acknowledged the negative influences occasioned by contact with his delinquent peers, but still engaged with them.

I was mixing with some delinquent friends. So, I was usually suspected of stealing things from the neighbours, though I did not do it. My parents also shouted at me and tried to prevent me from joining them, but I did not obey them. I still found that it was fascinating to join those friends.

(Van – Case 28)

6.3.2 Gang membership

Involvement with gangs was one of the most common risk factors (Bouchard & Spindler 2010; Gordon et al. 2014; Melde & Esbensen 2013; O’Brien et al. 2013; CR Thomas, Holizer & Wall 2013; White 2013). In this study, twenty-three offenders (76.7%) admitted that they had joined at least one group before they were arrested, which accounted for over three-quarters of all the participants. Among them, many participants admitted gang participation when they were at school, while others participated in selected groups because of similarities in backgrounds or interests, such as living in the same village or being engaged in games and the internet. Several participants admitted that they were involved with groups outside their school, especially after they dropped out of school. Most acknowledged the adverse impact of joining gangs, which might have negatively affected their behaviour and contributed to their conviction.

Phuong (Case 18) was involved in a group of school peers who usually truanted together to play most online games. Money and other items were also stolen by Phuong from his family to fund the game habit, a practice that also occurred with his peers, according to Phuong. For

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58 In most cases, this is not a formal gang but rather a group of delinquent peers.
all that, it was the group in Hanoi which proved most significant to his offending, a true gang in which all the members were engaged in acts of violence and illegal activities.

*Our job [in Hanoi] was related to numerous illegal activities from prostitution protector and reclaiming debts, to fighting against other groups. The ‘brother’, who was arrested with me, had been arrested twice prior to being involved with that case. Many members of my group were also arrested and prosecuted for other offences.*

(Phuong – Case 18)

Phuc also said that he was influenced by joining gangs in committing his offence, claiming an involvement with antisocial activities, especially fighting.

*I was arrested after trying to help one of my ‘brothers’ solve his conflict, though we attacked the wrong person.*

(Phuc – Case 16)

Thang even stressed the significance of gang affiliation, a point noted with his involvement with five other members of the group who were all subsequently prosecuted for the crime of robbery.

*I had a close connection with my group, which included my older brother and several of my cousins. One of my cousins was the head of the group and he planned the crimes we committed. Joining that group was the most important reason for my offending.*

(Thang – Case 22)

Diep (Case 4) also provided a case where gang behaviour ‘normalised’ criminal activities after an extended period of involvement.
I joined a group of nine members, which included two of my close friends in my school. We often backed each other up in fights against other groups. I was arrested when we attacked another man after one of my friends called on us for help. But, I did not think that I was influenced by joining these peers in my offending. I just helped him, as it was my responsibility.

(Diep – Case 4)

Likewise, Duong only blamed himself for his involvement in criminal activities, rather than gang involvement and criminal peers.

I did not think that I was affected by joining this group. My conviction was not for being involved with my friends or the group, but it was all my fault. I joined my friends voluntarily so I should not blame them for my conviction.

(Duong – Case 6)

Similarly, Giang (Case 8) also joined gangs in both school and the community where he lived, despite deeming this fact irrelevant to his offending. Information from the court judgments also pointed out that he was involved with not only fighting at school but also fighting with other groups in and around his area. Therefore, gang involvement was a notable common risk factor identified through the case studies, despite a refusal on the part of several participants to admit this fact.

However, it was important to note that while several participants joined gangs and committed their offences in the cooperation with other gang members, a number of offenders in this study seemed not to be affected by joining their groups in their offending. That is to say, although they joined gangs, their offences were not related to gang behaviour. This was consistent with the conclusion of White (2013) about the different kinds of gang behaviour. Nevertheless, the findings of this study regarding gang affiliation did suggest an increased likelihood of youth offending among young gang members (Bouchard & Spindler 2010; White 2013).
6.1.1. Other peer-related risk factors

6.3.3.1 Delinquent siblings

Previous studies have identified antisocial siblings as risk factors for youth offending at not only the family level but also the peer-related domain (Farrington & Welsh 2008; Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Farrington and Welsh (2008) also described antisocial siblings as an important family risk factor for youth offending, especially the influences from older siblings.

This study featured two cases of antisocial siblings among thirty case studies (6.7%): Thang (Case 22) and Tri (Case 23). In agreement with Farrington and Welsh (2008), it seemed that both were influenced by the actions of their siblings, irrespective of emotional closeness. In Case 22 (Thang), there were similarities between the two brothers though they did not get on well with each other. They were both risk-taking, violent and aggressive and engaged in games. Both dropped out of school after finishing grade nine. More importantly, the two brothers joined the same gang and committed crimes together.

*He was nearly two years older than me, but we joined the same group with some other cousins. We usually went out together at night and we often committed theft and burglary. Though we did not urge or encourage each other to offend, we never try to stop each other committing crime.*

(Case 22 – Thang)

In Case 23, Tri admitted to a degree of emotional distance from his brother. That did not prevent some degree of influence. His brother was involved in school violence, bullying others and then dropping out of school. Tri did exactly the same.

*I am not sure if I was affected by him in my crime, but we were always willing to help each other out with fighting against others. He usually supported me when I was beaten and so did I. He also saw me running into the house to take the scissors to attack the victim, but he did not stop me from doing that. He might have thought that I just wanted to threaten her.*

(Tri – Case 23)
6.3.3.2 Isolation from peers

Another peer-related risk factor also identified in this study was isolation from peers. (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005; KJ Thomas 2016). This happened in at least five cases in this research (16.7%). In several other cases, the participant also mentioned self-isolation and estrangement from fellow peers. There were two types of isolation from peers manifest among these participants. The first one was rejection or isolation by peers, which happened when other students kept a distance from the participants. This only occurred in two cases (6.7%).

I had an accident with boiling water when I was three years old. So, I have many terrifying scars on my face and neck as you can see. Many other students were scared of my appearance and they avoided talking to me. I was not confident to join others as well, so I decided not to get involved with others, except some cousins who studied in the same school with me.

(Co – Case 2)

Co’s case suggested a range of correlative factors of significance: peer isolation, and influence from the cousins who were involved in taking and trading in narcotics. Being rejected by most students, he became highly engaged with his cousins, some of whom were involved in drugs. Although not admitting that he or any of his cousins was addicted to heroin, Co disclosed that one of his cousins was arrested because of selling drugs just six months before he was arrested. Therefore, it might be arguable that Co was, in fact, significantly affected by the cousins he joined.

Trung (Case 26) had a similar experience after being seriously injured in an accident when he was six years old. He was subsequently diagnosed to have significant mental health issues, which hampered him in school. He was rejected by other students while he avoided them as well. He then dropped out of school and joined a group of friends who usually fed the working buffalos and cows together. These peers then encouraged him to watch pornography and drink alcohol regularly. His involvement with these peers was significant in his offending, given that he committed the crime of raping a child.
The second type of isolation from peers occurred when the participants intentionally chose not to mix with their peers for various reasons, affecting five cases (16.7%). Anh (Case 1) provided an illustration of this.

When going to school, I was timid and I rarely joined others in social activities. I did not know why but I was not confident to join them. It might be because I was separated from my parents when I was too young, so I always felt afraid. After becoming engaged with pornography, I even became less confident in joining others.

(Anh – Case 1)

Differently, Duy (Case 7) and Han (Case 10) also avoided involvement with others, though this was occasioned by their family circumstances. Both were abandoned by their parents, and felt miserable because several of their peers used this fact to mock them. Moreover, both of them were highly involved with antisocial activities. Therefore, they avoided getting involved with other people, except for their delinquent peers.

However, it was important to note that those who were retained, or involved in school violence, were more likely to be alienated or isolated from other students. The offenders who experienced grade retention all admitted that it was difficult for them to get on well with other students after being retained: their status disadvantaged them. The participants who were violent at school also pointed out that many students in their class avoided contact with them. This was in agreement with the statement that students who are violent in school are more likely to be alienated, disengaged and isolated from their peers because of their misbehaviour (Karcher 2002, p. 39). However, these participants seemed not to care much about that, as they most preferred joining their delinquent peers and gangs.

In general, isolation from peers was not a very common risk factor identified in this study. However, this factor did reinforce the adverse impacts of other risk factors, such as dropping out of school and involvement with delinquent peers and antisocial behaviour.

6.4 Conclusion

In this study, most school-related risk factors from the literature were identified and the most significant ones were school violence, school management issues and school disconnectedness. Among these factors, grade retention only appeared in several of the cases.
but was the strongest indicator for dropping out of school and school violence. Therefore, it was a significant factor for youth offending, although the previous studies in Vietnam have never mentioned grade retention as a risk factor for youth offending. It was also found that school violence was among the most prominent risk factors not only in the school domain but in general. This factor appeared in most cases in this study and most offenders admitted that they experienced, witnessed or took part in school violence. Though school violence has been an increasingly important factor influencing young people in Vietnam, previous studies have failed to investigate it as a risk factor for youth offending. The significant and most important findings focused on the likely considerable impact of grade retention and school violence on youth offending. This suggests that a more in-depth investigation for understanding their impact on youth offending is warranted. These factors also had a strong relationship with school disconnectedness, which together increased the likelihood of youth offending.

As far as the peer domain is concerned, most peer-related risk factors from the literature appeared in this study, but their impact on youth offending was variable. While isolation from peers was not common, involvement with delinquent peers was a much more significant predictor for youth offending. Most offenders were involved with and affected by delinquent peers while many committed their offences with their peers. These participants usually joined several peers in a group and followed others in their antisocial and criminal activities. A number of participants joined gangs in the school and/or community and subsequently became engaged in criminal activities. This suggested a significant effect of gang affiliation on the young people and their involvement in offending. Furthermore, those who were involved with gangs and delinquent friends usually exhibited significant issues within their family and this suggested a strong relationship between family risk factors and an involvement with delinquent peers and gangs. This in turn significantly increased the likelihood of their offending.
Chapter Seven
Community and Neighbourhood Risk Factors

7.1 Introduction

In addition to the individual, family, school and peer risk factors, the young offenders were also exposed to numerous other risk factors in the community and within their neighbourhood. Among the myriad of factors could be included poverty; influences of the internet and violence games; availability of drugs and firearm; and the nature of dysfunctional neighbourhoods. From the case studies, some community and neighbourhood risk factors were identified and are presented in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Community and Neighbourhood Risk Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dysfunctional neighbourhood(^{59})</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Issues of society management</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative influences of the internet</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Violent online games</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Availability of drugs and firearms (weapons)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2 Poverty

Among the factors listed above, poverty was not among the most common risk factors in the community domain in this study as it was evident in only 60% of case studies. However, this was one of the most significant risk factors in this domain. Though it was not the direct reason for offending by the participants in most of the cases, it appeared that poverty was significantly related to other risk factors for offending, as it provided some background to the offenders. It was evident from the case studies that many risk factors, such as low parental involvement, lack of close parent-child relationships, lack of supervision and child neglect could be related to poor socio-economic background of the interviewees. Poverty was a

\(^{59}\) This factor includes violence in the community, gangs and crimes in the neighbourhood, as well as the availability of drugs and firearms which appeared in all thirty cases in this study.
significant risk factor for youth offending at the macro level, increasing the adverse effects of other risk factors at lower levels (meso and micro levels) on the likelihood of youth offending.

It can be seen from Table 7.1 that more than half the participants had experienced poverty – eighteen offenders were identified by the raters to have been affected by their family’s impoverished circumstances (60%). Though the actual degree of poverty might have differed among the participants, all were affected by the economic conditions of their families. Most were not cognisant of this as a factor, though Co (Case 2) acknowledged that he offended because of economic reasons. His family was destitute, and he got married when he was just over thirteen years old. His wife had to feed both Co and herself after the marriage, as his parents did not support him. The situation was compounded by his wife’s pregnancy. Desperation in finding alternative sources of income proved critical. While explaining that he did not know that he was engaged in acts of drug trafficking, Co did admit that the ‘supplier’ paid him some money to help with delivering the small bag, which contained heroin.

*I was still going to school, so I could not help with earning money. My family was very poor and my wife was pregnant. When the other man asked me to deliver a small bag and he would give me some money, I was willing to help him.*

(Co – Case 2)

However, the majority of the participants did not see poverty as an actual risk factor for their offending, though they admitted that it was one of the disadvantages they continually faced. When asked about the relationship between poverty and their offending, most responded without any hesitation that there was no link.

*My family was poor, but it was not the reason for my offending. My parents never asked me to help them earn money. I committed my crime because I needed money for online games and joining my friends. It was not at all related to the poverty in my family.*

(Tung – Case 27)

Similarly, Truong (Case 25) admitted that his parents were in debt because of his gambling habits, but denied that it was the reason for him to commit robbery:
My parents had to pay a lot of money to cover my debt and they got into debt [as a result]. However, I committed the crime of robbery just because I lacked legal knowledge and was helping my friend, not because of the poverty.

(Truong – Case 25)

Poverty might be related to compounding and aggravating other circumstances. Poverty can also be seen as relevant in other contexts: parental abandonment, lack of parental involvement and damaged parent-child relationships (e.g. when the parents focused on working to earn money or the failure in cooperation between families and school in managing and educating the students).

As discussed in the previous chapter, parental neglect featured among the significant family risk factors identified through the case studies, in that twelve participants (40%) were separated from their parents, including three cases (10%) of permanent separation (abandonment). Importantly, except for some cases of divorce, all other cases of neglect were significantly related to poverty, with parents leaving their children, mostly because of economic issues. Anh (Case 1), Diep (Case 4), Duy (Case 7), Han (Case 10), Phuc (Case 16), Phong (Case 17) and Trong (Case 24) all experienced the departure of at least one of their parents to work in other areas.

Diep (Case 4) said that his father was the closest to him among his family members. He respected his father and stressed his valued role during the interview. Separation induced by work reasons affected him.

I respected my dad and I always obeyed him. But he lived far away from the family, as he got a better job elsewhere. He rarely came back home [and while I was in conflict with my mother]. She was very busy with working as well, so neither of them knew anything about me. If my father had been at home, I would never have been involved in criminal activities.

(Diep – Case 4)

Likewise, Trong (Case 24) also confided that when he was small, his parents were both working in another province. Trong and his older sister were left at home with their grandparents, while their parents sometimes came back home on visits. A preoccupation with
work tended to follow them. On returning, they firmly focused on the farm work as well, forgetting to mind their children.

In several cases of divorce, although the main reason for the parent-child separation was divorce, poverty also appeared as contributing to neglect as well, such as Case 16 (Phuc) and Case 30 (Xuong). Both lived with their mothers after the divorce, while their father showed minimal interest in their welfare. Both lived in difficult economic circumstances; their mothers had to work extended hours to maintain the children. This heavy work burden resulted in a lack of supervision and parental involvement.

_After the divorce, my mother alone had to take care of the three children. Though my grandmother helped build a small house and let us live with her, we had to live in very poor conditions. So, my two older sisters had to drop out of school very early to help my mother to earn a living._

(Phuc – Case 16)

Similarly, Xuong (Case 30) continued living with his mother and his two younger siblings after the divorce of his parents and described how his mother hardly had any free time to be involved with him.

_We were lucky, as my uncle was the manager of a rubber tree farm and he supported us. He gave my mother a piece of land and helped build a small house for us. He also offered my mum a job as rubber worker so that she could earn a living. However, she had to work very hard and she rarely had any spare time to spend with us._

(Xuong – Case 30)

Neglect was most significant with the participants who were abandoned by their parents, such as Duy (Case 7), Han (Case 10) and Phong (Case 17). Duy and Han never had a functional family; both never knew anything about their fathers. Both were also abandoned, given the indigent circumstances of their mothers. Duy admitted that his mother was in a dire situation after his father left, so she decided to send him to another family. However, the problem of poverty appeared again within his new family, especially after his adopted parents both died after contracting diseases. This strongly affected his life and his involvement in offending, given that he was sent to a pagoda and a reform school subsequently.
My adopted father had lung cancer while my adopted mother had a problem with high blood pressure, so neither of them could work anymore. They had to spend a lot of money on the treatments for their diseases, and they sold all valuable belongings in the family. When both of them died in the same year, there was nothing left in the house. I was sent to live in a pagoda\textsuperscript{60} then.

(Duy – Case 7)

The case of Han was somewhat different, as his mother was raped before giving birth to him. In this case, two situations presented themselves: the mother’s unfortunate status as a victim of rape, and the presence of poverty. Han confided that his grandparents were poor and his mother did not have a stable job. This meant that Han then had to live in poverty with no parental care.

After she left, my grandparents found difficulty in taking care of me. They were both farmers and they spent most of their time working. They did not actually know what I did and how I was treated at school. They definitely knew nothing about me.

(Han – Case 10)

Phong (Case 17) proved to be a very particular case of abandonment, as he used to have a happy family with both parents involved and engaged. Both parents were workers in a shoe factory, and able to maintain a stable life despite not being well off. Circumstances changed when his father, followed by his mother, relocated to South Korea to work under a labour contract program when Phong was only four years old.

It seemed that earning money in South Korea was much easier than in Vietnam. Therefore, some years later, my mother sent me to live with my grandparents in my hometown and she went to South Korea to join my father. She told me that she wanted to earn a lot of money so that we would have a happier life. However, they almost never came back to visit me for years, though they regularly sent money to my grandparents to take care of me.

(Phong – Case 17)

\textsuperscript{60} In Vietnam, it is common that pagodas receive and take care of abandoned children as a charity activity.
In this case, while there was no dimension of poverty for Phong, there was neglect. His parents abandoned him and went abroad to earn more money, and the distance between Phong and his parents was subsequently exacerbated. Neglect was in turn a consequence of poverty induced by parental abandonment.

Poverty also proved to be an unsparing influence in several intact families. Several offenders mentioned the direct consequences of poverty on them, their parents and the relationships between them. Several participants explained that their parents had laboured with difficulty to earn money to feed the family, which resulted in their absence from involvement with the children.

The preoccupation with work by his parents at the expense of his care bothered Anh (Case 1). Anh found himself in a similar situation when his parents left him at home with his grandmother and went to work when he was only three years old. After his younger brother was born, he had to take care of his brother when his parents went to work, despite being just over ten years old. Unlike others, Anh expressed no regret over this, understanding that his family’s destitute state required such decisions.

Tri’s family also embedded in a situation of socio-economic necessity, with both parents leaving three children unsupervised as they journeyed to other areas to earn additional income. Both Tri and his brother were then involved in antisocial behaviour, as they were unsupervised by their parents. He also stressed that his parents worked hard, but his family was still so poor that they did not have money to compensate the victim after he committed his crime.

*When I was punished and sent to the prison, my parents did not have enough money to compensate the victim. They had asked to borrow money from others but no one had accepted.*

(Tri – Case 23)

The participants interviewed also reveal the pervasiveness of poverty: not merely in their own families, but those around them, a condition seemingly common in their areas. Anh (Case 1), Co (Case 2) and Xuong (Case 30) were all from ethnic minority backgrounds and lived in mountainous areas. All experienced inter-family poverty, though each differed in their
circumstances. Anh said that he was of Muong background (an ethnic minority in Vietnam) and he lived in an area in which most of the residents were of an ethnic minority background.

Most of the population in my village were of minority backgrounds and they mostly did agricultural work to earn a living. Recently, several people of Kinh ethnicity moved into the area and they usually lived near the centre of the town. They were much better off than others in the village. But, most of the people there still lived in poverty.

(Anh – Case 1)

Similarly, Co (Case 2) was also from an ethnic minority community, and he stressed the poverty in his area of residence as well, leading to what effectively amounted to child marriage.

Most of the families in the village were poor. Many children had to drop out of school early to help their family earn money. I did not drop out of school but I got married to a seventeen-year-old girl when I was thirteen years old. The main reason for my marriage was that my family needed someone to help with working to feed the family.

(Co – Case 2)

As mentioned above, in other situations of poverty, most participants also stated that the surrounding environs of their residence were poor as well. In Cases 1, 4, 16, 17, 23 and 24, all participants admitted that their parents had to leave their hometowns to find better work, a situation common in the areas in which they lived. Anh, Diep, Phuc, Tri and Trong all confided to witnessing several other parents leaving the village to other areas to earn a living.

My family lived in a remote religious [Catholic] village. Most of the people there were of Kinh ethnicity, but they all lived in poverty. The village was in a mountainous area so the people there only did farm work.

(Trung – Case 26)

In Case 26, Trung dropped out of school and he helped his parents with feeding their working cows in the afternoon. Many other children in the village also went out into the fields to feed their working cattle, because their parents were too busy working. The victim’s family was
destitute as well, so his rape victim had to go alone to feed the cow in the field while her mother was doing her own work. Thus, she was isolated and alone when attacked. It can be seen from this case that while the parents had to focus on working because of poverty, they might have ignored their children’s safety and well-being.

Unstable family income and poverty have previously been identified as risk factors for youth offending (Public Safety Canada 2009), while Hawkins et al. (2000) and Shader (2001) also noted that poverty might predict youth offending. In this present study, poverty was also identified as a significant and shared risk factor that increased the likelihood of participant’s involvement in offending. Poverty may not have been the direct reason for the offenders’ conviction but provided the backdrop to the context of offending, mediated by other factors. Given that Vietnam is a developing country in which poverty is still a critical issue, it is significant to investigate this factor in the relation to youth offending in Vietnam as well.

7.3 The internet and online violent games involvement

Internet usage has become very popular in Vietnam recently. According to the statistics from the internetworldstats.com in 2015 (Figure 7.1), Vietnam had the sixth highest internet usage of any country in Asia, with 45.5 million internet users, which represents about 50.2% of the whole population of Vietnam (Table 7.2).

According to a report co-produced by Google and Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) on the ‘Online activities of Vietnamese people’ in 2014 examining internet usage in Vietnam, 95% went online to read the news, 87% used social networks and listened to music, while nearly two-thirds of internet users played online games (62%) (Thanhniennnews 2014).

It can be seen from Table 7.2 that the proportion of internet users in Vietnam in 2015 was lower than that in Japan, South Korea and Malaysia, but higher than that of China, Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.
Moreover, according to the Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan in a discussion in the National Assembly in 2010, 77.0 per cent of online games in Vietnam were related to themes of violence and killing; 9.0 per cent featured gambling, while only 14.0 per cent of the games had positive features (e.g. education). Moreover, 66% of primary school students, 81% of secondary students and 75% of university students were involved in online gaming. According to D Nguyen (2010) this could be a significant factor for influencing violent behaviour among the students who engaged with violent online games.

Through the case studies in this research, the involvement with the internet and violent online games appeared to be a most formidable risk factor for youth offending. Though this factor was identified in some cases, it was usually among the direct factors leading to participants offending. However, it is important to note that internet violence and such online games did not have a proven causal link to youth offending, but they rather correlated with other risk factors in its contribution to youth offending.
Table 7.2: The proportion of internet users in the Asian top 10 internet countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population(^{61}) (million people)</th>
<th>Internet users (million people)</th>
<th>User Penetration (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>126.6(^{62})</td>
<td>114.9</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, South</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,367.82</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>252.2</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>155.8</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.1 Negative influences from the internet

Among the offenders, twenty-three participants stated that they used the internet (76.7%) and they were exposed to its harmful effects, such as violence, pornography and criminal activities. Though not all the participants who had been involved with the internet experienced the adverse influences (Funk et al. 2004), it could be seen during interviews that several participants were significantly affected as a result of their involvement with the internet.

Giang (Case 8) said that he did not play online games, though he sometimes went online to watch films on the web. Giang was interested in action movies, which usually contained scenes of graphic violence, including shooting and killing. As he explained, he knew how to use a shotgun through the violent movies he had watched.

I usually watched action movies online and I saw scenes of people shooting and killing each other regularly. I had seen many kinds of guns used in the films and noted how they were used to attack others. When my ‘brother’ gave me the shotgun, I was

\(^{61}\) Asian Development Bank (2015)
\(^{62}\) https://populationpyramid.net/japan/2015/
confident in using it. I intended to hunt birds with that gun, so I stored it at home. But, when fighting with the other group, I decided to use the gun for taking revenge.

(Giang – Case 8)

It is important to note that, while not positing any direct relationship between viewing violent films and acting violently, Giang’s enthusiasm to learn from such media suggested an important risk factor at play.

The same went for Case 12 (Hai). Hai admitted that he often watched violent and horror movies on the internet. His situation provides a case of instruction, with pornographic films effectively becoming means to practise sexual technique.

We usually went to bars and hotels after watching porn videos. I was dating with several girls when I was only in grade ten. I also got involved with several others through ‘cuu net’ and we usually went to the hotels or guesthouses together, though we might not have known each other beforehand. Once when I was in the hotel with a ‘ket net’ girl her boyfriend appeared with several others and I was seriously beaten.

(Hai – Case 12)

Hai also said that they often chose the computers in the corner of the internet agencies so the owners could not detect when they watched porn. The point tended to be a superfluous one: the internet owners generally did not care what was accessed on the agency computers.

Similar to this case, several other participants also admitted that they sometimes accessed porn websites at the internet agencies, though irregularly. This could be done with few limitations.

63 Cuu net’ (net rescue) is the activity of rescuing a ‘ket net’ girl or young woman. When being stuck in an internet agency, this girl or woman goes online, searching and chatting with unknow men and asking them to come and pay internet fee for her. Then she would follow the man (or men) to a hotel for sexual intercourse as an exchange. ‘Cuu net’ is considered potentially risky, as crimes such as rape, robbery and even murder could take place.

64 ‘Ket net’ is the situation where a girl or a woman is stuck at the internet agency at night due to not having money to pay the fee and she will call someone for ‘cuu net’.
I sometimes watched violent and pornographic films on the internet. That is absolutely normal and anyone who used the internet could do that for relaxation and entertainment. I also saw many others watching porn and violent videos when they were in the internet agencies. I did not think that I was influenced by using the internet or watching these kinds of films.

(Van – Case 28)

Among those engaging in pornography, Anh (Case 1) and Trung (Case 26) were the most affected, given that both of them committed the crime of raping a child. Though they were subject to other risk factors, both of them stressed the negative influences of their engagement with pornography as the most significant factor in their offending.

Anh (Case 1) became involved with the internet after following his friends to an internet agency. He proved particularly fond of porn websites, which he visited regularly during visits to the internet agency near his house. Anh proved to be particularly disturbed, admitting to feeling the adverse effects of watching pornography on his physical and mental health. Ominously, he even feared that he would commit rape one day.

After being involved with pornography, I was obsessed by the pornographic scenes. I even sometimes had dreams about having sexual intercourse with young and beautiful women. I usually wondered what would happen when I could not control myself and committed rape.

(Anh – Case 1)

Similarly, Trung (Case 26) also committed the crime of raping a child after his engagement with pornography, found after accessing downloadable content on his friend’s mobile phone. The issue was exacerbated by mental health and alcohol problems after an accident. Therefore, his offence was the consequence of a combination of these factors. For that reason, the link with pornography as a risk factor can only be understood in the context of the fragile mental state of the individual in question.

To understand the role of pornography here is to understand a range of factors at play in the picture of various offenders. Not all who watched it committed rape (Ferguson & Hartley 2009; Hald & Malamuth 2015). A glaring point was presence of mental instability and
vulnerability, including lack of self-control. Therefore, though pornography might be a significant risk factor for several participants’ offences, this factor should be considered in relationship with other factors, such as mental health issues (Trung – Case 26) and lack of self-control (Anh – Case 1 and Trung – Case 26).

7.3.2 Influences of violent games

Among the twenty-three participants who were involved with the internet, nineteen offenders (63.3%) admitted that they also engaged in online games, including those who were addicted to online games. These participants were affected by not only the adverse influences of the internet (Funk et al. 2004), but also the effects of the violent games they played. Participation in online games took various forms, but there was a prevalence of games featuring dominant characters killing their enemies. Most admitted that they played several kinds of games, but most were related to fighting and killing others, such as Age of Empire, Counter-Strike, Crossfire, Jx1-Swordman, World of JX and League of Legends. This was consistent with the conclusion that 77% of online games in Vietnam were related to violence (D Nguyen 2010).

_I played games from grade eight. Many kinds of games, like... Jx1-Swordman, World of JX, Crossfire, Counter-Strike and Age of Empire... but I was very good at all those games. I did not want to go to school or study anymore after that. I left school in the middle of grade eight._

(Sang – Case 19)

Case 3 (Cu) provides a spectacular instance of such influence. He abducted his five-year-old cousin and forced his family to handle a large amount of money. His involvement with violent games and films effectively normalised a pattern of conduct – activities such as fighting, kidnapping, killing other people and taking their property were deemed normal. He even intended to use poison to kill the victim’s family before kidnapping him, but decided against it.

_After watching these action movies and playing fighting games, I became more daring and I was not afraid of anything. I always wanted to do something else, like ... especially fighting with others._

(Cu – Case 3)
Online films also provided instructions Cu felt he could follow to commit the kidnapping. He seemed to show little awareness between the reality portrayed on film, and his own reality.

The influence of violent games on the offenders’ behaviour also seemed to appear in other cases, such as Case 4 (Diep), Case 7 (Duy), Case 16 (Phuc), Case 17 (Phong), Case 21 (Tam) and several other cases, though not all these participants admitted to it. Interestingly, there was at least one instance – Van (Case 28) – when a participant acknowledged that he was so strongly affected by violent games that he could still hallucinate about the killing of others after leaving the internet agency. Evidently, Van was a violent fantasist.

After leaving the internet agencies, when going home, I still saw many enemies [in game] passing me... They did not attack me but just moved on. I could easily kill them to earn ‘gold and experiences’\textsuperscript{65} [smiled]… Luckily, I did not attack them... yes, I had logged out of my account and turned off the computer, I still remembered. So … I immediately sat down at the side of the road, closing my eyes and taking a rest. After about thirty minutes, I opened my eyes and I could see everything normally.

(Van – Case 28)

The interview sample revealed an entire economy in terms of seeking income to play games. Games became the justification for crime, an excuse to fund a habit. In Case 3, Cu at first said that he wanted to help his mother to solve the conflict with the neighbour (the victim’s family). However, he then admitted that he and his friend committed the offences because they needed money for games and they knew that the victim’s family was well off. This was the most common reason for those offenders who were engaged in games and the internet to commit their offences, which could also be seen in Case 7 (Duy), Case 14 (Long), Case 20 (Son), Case 21 (Tam), Case 22 (Thang), Case 27 (Tung) and Case 28 (Van). All these participants committed their offences in order to obtain money for playing games. Most committed violent and serious crimes, such as kidnapping to appropriate property, robbery, robbery by snatching and murder, to obtain the victim’s money and belongings. This again confirmed the strong relationship between online games involvement and violent behaviour among the participants, given that they needed money to fund game play.

\textsuperscript{65} This was ‘code’ from the game.
The participants seem to show patterns of game addiction, a point admitted by Cu (Case 3), Duy (Case 7), Han (Case 10), Tam (Case 21), Tung (Case 27) and Van (Case 28). Though some of the participants did not think that they were addicted to games, their statements had demonstrated adverse outcomes. Duy (Case 7), while claiming he was not addicted, still conceded to playing excessively.

*I spent all money for games. I could play games anytime if I had enough money for that. I usually stayed all night in internet agencies to play games. The longest time I spent playing games was three continuous days without resting. I had noodle and water there, so I did not feel tired at all... I actually played games too much... but I never wondered why... I just liked it.*

(Duy – Case 7)

Case 28 (Van) also revealed the sheer commitment to engaging in such games, with others also admitting to playing for days on end. In desperation, deceptions were practiced to obtain money from family and neighbours; theft took place; and loans sought.

A link to funding such game habits with property theft, sometimes exacted violently, was evident in the following cases, such as in Case 4 (Diep), Case 9 (Gioi), Case 20 (Son), Case 21 (Tam), Case 22 (Thang), Case 27 (Tung) and Case 28 (Van). The game economy was effectively being subsidised by violent undertakings to obtain extra income. In some cases, the consequences were very serious when the perpetrators tried to kill the victims to take their money or property and several victims had even been killed. However, most did not realise or admit the influence of violent games on their thinking and behaviour.

*I just did the things I wanted and what I thought that I should do, but not because of the influences of games. I joined my friends and attacked the other men because I thought that I should help my friend. I did not believe that violent games could influence my behaviour.*

(Diep – Case 4)

Van (Case 28) reflected on the hallucination after playing games. He also noted the peer networks that were also involved in such games.
I could feel the effects of violent games when I had constant thoughts of killing and fighting with others. I had seen that people in the internet agencies were very quick-tempered and they quickly fought with others. I think that my engagement in violent games and the internet was very important to my offence. All my friends who took part in the robbery with me were highly engaged in games as well.

(Van – Case 28)

In this case, although Van might not see the effects of cumulative risk factors on his offending, he might be right in evaluating the adverse influences of violent games on his behaviour.

A compounding factor to the playing of such games was the location such activities took place in. The internet agency became a de facto meeting place, a home away from home, and a place of adverse socialisation, where young people were exposed to numerous risk factors that had strong adverse influences on their behaviour.

Long (Case 14) provided an ample illustration of this phenomenon, running away from home, and spending days and nights on end at internet agencies. The internet agency also facilitated other activities: drug use and sale with customers obtained through the premises.

I used to spend the whole night in the internet agencies for playing games. During that time, I saw others using ‘ice’ and I started using it soon when someone offered me some to try. I then bought ice from them and used it regularly, as my father usually gave me a lot of money. When I was more involved with ice use, I started selling it to earn money. It was really easy to make money this way.

(Long – Case 14)

Duy (Case 7) admitted that before he was sent to the reform school, he was highly involved in violent games. Duy also admitted that he was exposed to many other adverse effects from the internet agencies, such as running away from home, fighting, smoking and criminal activities as well. Van (Case 28) also stressed the adverse effects of the internet agencies, often being abodes of violence. He revealed to being a witness to fighting in the internet agencies regularly, including severe cases of murder.
Fighting frequently occurred in the internet agencies and the players usually seemed to be aggressive. People sometimes came to search and fight the players. Parents also came to find their children and they usually shouted at and beat their children right there. I even witnessed several cases in which the children resisted their parents when being beaten. I also knew at least two cases of murder between the game players.

(Van – Case 28)

While the link between video games and media with violence is not conclusive, the findings of this study suggest a persistent presence of motivations behind the committing of crimes to fund the habit of engaging in such games. The location of such activities was also significant, effectively constituting a ‘home away from home’ for the young offenders.

7.4 Dysfunctional neighbourhood

The issue of dysfunctional neighbourhoods appeared in all thirty cases (100.0%) with causes varying from the availability of drugs, firearms and other weapons to violence in the local area, through to gangs involved in other illegal and criminal activities in the neighbourhood. These instances linked with other risk factors provided such environmental circumstances that provided a significant backdrop of risk behind youth offending.

7.4.1 Availability of drugs and weapons

The ready availability of drugs and weapons was important in many cases in this study. Eighteen participants (60%) admitted that they were exposed to available drugs and offensive weapons. Though such ease of access did not entail a direct influence on behaviour, the background exposure to such a market of drugs and weapons created conditions of considerable risk of the likelihood and seriousness of their offences. Despite the participants being not directly affected by these factors, it was clear that the environmental circumstances of dysfunctional neighbourhoods constituted a significant risk factor.

7.4.1.1 Availability of drugs

Six participants (20.0%) admitted to some involvement with drugs; all claimed ease in purchasing them. At least three other offenders (10.0%) were involved with regular drug use despite refusing to admit it. A striking point in the interview sample was the ease participants

66 This term is used to present issues in the neighbourhood including drugs, violence, gangs and crimes.
could obtain narcotics, with some admitting to a thriving narcotics market of sale and use. In several cases, the participants lived in areas with a high rate of drug trafficking and use, such as the case of Co (Case 2). Though Co did not admit to intentionally committing the crime of drug trafficking, he acknowledged at the time that drug-related crimes were significant in his area, as he had witnessed several people in his village being arrested because of buying and selling heroin. The case report from his prison files also stated that his residential area was known as one of the major hotspots for drug crimes in the north of Vietnam67.

The drug issues were serious in my area. Some people in the village were addicted to heroin or opium. Several individuals in the community were also involved in drug trafficking and trading and they were arrested and incarcerated. My grandfather was also addicted to opium before being arrested for selling drugs. He died soon after that due to age and disease.

(Co – Case 2)

Additionally, Co made clear during the interview that while not admitting to being involved in using drugs, some of his close friends (mostly his cousins) were involved with drug use and its trade. One of his cousins was arrested for drug dealing some months before Co was arrested. In Case 4, Diep also claimed that, though he had never tried drugs, his group of peers included some heroin addicts. He acknowledged the ease of obtaining such drugs and the availability of money to purchase drugs.

Observations about the ease of obtaining drugs were also found with Duong (Case 6) who lived near the border between Vietnam and China. Duong claimed that heroin, ecstasy, or ice in his area were readily available, knowledge made more relevant for him having been caught in trafficking drugs. Duong described a fluid, thriving market taking place on the Chinese-Vietnamese border, explaining that the drugs seized on his arrest were given to him by one of his ‘brothers’ in China. Duong, effectively, reflects on a lifestyle fuelled by the availability of drugs in regional proximity to China:

I did not know any place to buy drugs or any network of drug trading in my area. However, it was easy to get ice or ecstasy in the area if you had money. It was common that the people in the area bought and used drugs such as ice or ecstasy in the bars or karaoke. I had joined my friends using ice several times when we went to the bars.

(Duong – Case 6)

Likewise, Sang (Case 19) and his friends were arrested red-handed when trafficking heroin. However, it was interesting that his family was quite well-off and he obviously had no need to fund a habit or any urgent necessity to obtain finance for drugs. He explained that he just went along with his friend, but he was prosecuted as he knew that his friend was trafficking heroin. He also said that it was not difficult to find an ‘agent’ for buying drugs in his area.

Long (Case 14) was also prosecuted for the crime of narcotics trading. However, his case was different from the others given his admission that he used ice regularly and found trading in narcotics lucrative. Long described a social scene of gaming at internet agencies and using ice in the course of play.

*It was incredibly easy to buy and sell ice. I first bought it at an internet agency when another guy was waiting there to sell the drugs to others. Then when I began selling ice, I also started from the internet agencies. It was not easy at first, but I gradually got more regular customers. This provided me with a high and stable income.*

(Long – Case 14)

When the participants revealed themselves to be drug addicted, the relationship between substance abuse and offending was even more apparent. At least two of the participants admitted that they were addicted. Duc (Case 5) and Hoang (Case 11) revealed a nexus between feeding addiction and obtaining funds. Duc and Hoang were among the oldest participants in this study, and both had been convicted twice. More importantly, both of them stressed that drug addiction was the main reason for both of their convictions. Both were addicted both to heroin before their first conviction and lapsing after release, which led to their second round of convictions. Hoang reflected on the ease of obtaining narcotics after his release.
It seemed that my friends could easily buy drugs and they encouraged me to try. Only when I was high engaged with them did I know that they were addicted and they needed to sell drugs to earn money. Thus they tried to let me use heroin. I then followed them selling heroin and I was soon arrested.

(Hoang – Case 11)

In several other cases, the offenders were engaged with the recreational use of drugs. Unlike others, Phuong (Case 18) and Van (case 28) did not commit offences because of any monetary need. They admitted that their involvement with drugs was just for relaxation. Both similarly confirmed the ease with which one could obtain such products, suggesting a thriving narcotics market.

At some time, I used ice almost every day. We usually took ice to the hotel, bars and karaoke. There were several ‘agents’ who delivered ice immediately when needed. We could order it with only a phone call. They would never sell it to a stranger, but I was so familiar with them that I could order it anytime.

(Phuong – Case 18)

Van (Case 28) also experienced using several types of drugs, including cannabis and ice, both obtained with ease.

I first used cannabis when one of my ‘brothers’ gave it to me. Then he showed me ice as well. I did not know where he got it, but it seemed that he did not have any difficulty in buying these drugs.

(Van – Case 28)

7.4.1.2 The availability of firearms and weapons

Another feature tied to drug availability was the presence of offensive and dangerous weapons (e.g. guns, swords, and knives). In previous studies, the availability of firearms and other weapons was identified as being related to both violence (DM Nguyen 2014) and drugs (HS Pham 2015). Regarding the availability of weapons, at least twelve participants admitted that offensive weapons could be easily obtained in their neighbourhoods. Weapons such as knives, swords and steel pipes were usually used in fights. More seriously, in several cases
the participants even used firearms in altercations, or at least they admitted that it was possible to buy guns and other special support tools. Several participants acknowledged that they had regularly seen other people in the area using guns for hunting.

Though Giang (Case 8) did not live near the border, the availability of firearms seemed to be significant in his regard. This case might be the strongest example of the easy availability of weapons revealed by this study. Giang was involved in two cases of shooting. The first instance was when another man shot at his group after an altercation, an incident dealt with by the Law of Administrative Violation Handling and the second one was the case when he shot another group with a shotgun. The circumstances suggested the accumulation of weapons outside the legal channels of the police and the military. Giang indicated that he had seen several people in his area possessing guns and he could even borrow a shotgun from his ‘brothers’.

I fought regularly, but I had never used a gun in solving a conflict with others. I just borrowed the shotgun from my ‘brother’ and stored it at home for shooting birds. Other people in my area also had guns for hunting. However, in that case, I could not stand it when being repeatedly attacked by the other group. So I used the gun to attack them.

(Giang – Case 8)

Duong (Case 6), who lived in a border area, disclosed that trading in individual support tools and weapons was a common feature in his area in terms of criminal activities. The market was seemingly teeming with knives and swords, amongst other weapons. Although he did not often see serious crimes using such offensive weapons in his neighbourhood, he confirmed it was commonplace for students to conceal weapons in their school bags and bring them to school. Moreover, many people from other provinces bought these weapons when visiting his residential area as well. More seriously, other dangerous weapons such as guns, support tools and other police equipment could also be found in his neighbourhood, suggesting problems with the control of such weapons distribution.

68 Special tools and weapons, which are usually used by the police.
It was very easy to buy knives, swords and other weapons, which were imported from China. It was also possible to buy special supportive equipment for the police, such as electric clubs, electric guns or self-defence spray. Some could buy guns and bullets near the border, but I had never seen this. However, I did see that some people in my area owned shotguns.

(Duong – Case 6)

Similarly, Phuc (Case 16) also indicated the easy availability of weapons in his area in a suburb of Hanoi, including firearms.

I had heard of people near my area using guns and other tools for committing crimes. My comrades also told me that they could even buy guns, electric clubs and other tools as well but I did not know where they got them.

(Phuc – Case 16)

Truong (Case 25) and Van (Case 28) also stated that the ample availability of firearms in their area was apparent. Several people made their gun ownership clear. They also believed that the management of firearms and other weapons by the authorities was not very effective, and the availability of arms and firearms was also a significant issue in public safety as well. Truong (Case 25) went even further, speaking of students taking weapons to school.

Group fighting was common in both my school and my residential area. They usually used weapons like knives, swords, sticks and cudgels to attack others. Several students even brought weapons to school for fighting with others. I myself sometimes brought knives to school as well.

(Truong – Case 25)

Gioi (Case 9), Son (Case 20) and Tung (Case 27) all used knives to attack their victims. Tri (Case 23) used a pair of scissors to attack his uncle’s wife. In Case 22, though the offenders did not attack the victim, Thang admitted to usually using knives to threaten the victims in cases of robbery he participated in. Phuc (Case 16) and Phuong (Case 18) also prepared knives and other weapons when attacking their victims though they then used other things like weapons. While Phuong’s victim died because of serious injuries to his head caused by a
brick, Phuc’s victim was also in a critical condition, given that he was attacked by Phuc’s friends as well.

Throughout all the case studies, the availability of weapons was clearly evident. This finding matched those of several reports by the Ministry of Public Security, which have stressed the seriousness of weapons availability and the ineffectiveness of light arms control in Vietnam. This was understandable as the control and management of weapons is among the critical challenges facing Vietnam (T Dang 2011; Duc Nam 2012; DM Nguyen 2014; Vietnamnet 2012).

7.4.2 Violence, gangs and crime in the neighbourhood

An additional factor to the mix of risk factors was community violence which was also significant in many cases. This is regarded as a significant risk factor for youth offending. Many participants admitted that they had regularly witnessed violence between normal community members and gangs in their areas. It is significant to note that such violence seemed to follow the participants from within school and outside school in their neighbourhoods, such as Cu (Case 3), Giang (Case 8), Phuc (Case 16), Phuong (Case 18), Trong (Case 24), Truong (Case 25), Vu (Case 29), Xuong (Case 30) and several others. Phuong’s case is particularly indicative of this, having been violent in school and in the course of his later activities as a pimp.

I usually fought at school, but it was not too serious. However, when I joined the group in Hanoi and worked as a prostitute protector, I was engaged in violence more frequently. Fighting with other people or groups became a regular activity, and that was an important part of my job.

(Phuong – Case 18)

In Case 16, Phuc also admitted that gang involvement was accompanied by regular combat with other groups, including those from nearby villages.

I had been there to that village for fighting several times. My friends and I also attacked the people from that village when they came to our village. Therefore, there was a significant conflict between the young men from the two villages.

(Phuc – Case 16)
Another issue of significance in this study was the existence of active gangs in the neighbourhood. As discussed in the previous section about gang involvement, 23 participants (66.7%) had joined gangs at both the school and neighbourhood level.

To reiterate, in addition to what has been discussed in other parts of this thesis [Section 6.3.2.], gang involvement, combined with other risk factors in the community/neighbourhood, such as violence, drugs, other crimes and other illegal activities, created an environment of various risk factors. Other participants who did not join gangs also stressed the negative influences of gangs in the community.

Furthermore, in many cases, the participants were exposed to criminal and other illegal activities such as theft, burglary and robbery, drug-related crimes, gambling and violating legal regulations. Moreover, in several cases, these neighbourhood risk factors, when combined with poverty might significantly increase the likelihood of youth involvement in offending. The case of Co (Case 2) is particularly relevant. Co lived in a poor mountainous area dominated by agriculture and conditions dictated by being close to Laos. According to the reports of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), in recent years, the circumstances of drug-related crime in the border areas between Vietnam and Laos had increased in both volume and seriousness. Every year an average of 3,500 cases of drug-related crimes are detected in the border regions, with around 5,000 drug offenders being arrested and prosecuted.\(^69\) Co also admitted that some families in his village were much better off than others, though he said that he did not know how they earned their money\(^70\). However, he did admit that some of them, including his grandfather, were arrested because of their involvement in drug-related crimes. Other people who were addicted to drugs also lived in his area. McCord, Widom and Crowell argue that ‘living in a neighbourhood where there are high levels of poverty and crime increases the risk of involvement in serious crime for all children growing up there’ (cited in Shader 2001). Thus, Co and other young people in the area were at high risk of involvement in offending.

Similarly, Duong (Case 6), Vu (Case 29) and Xuong (Case 30) lived near the border, and experienced the same issues. Duong and Vu lived in Lang Son, with one of the biggest border crossings between Vietnam and China. Both lived very near the crossing, which tends to be a


\(^70\) Co’s living residence is among the drug ‘hot spots’ in Vietnam, and it is likely that several people in that area were rich because of drug trading.
fluid one permitting easy entry between countries. Both admitted crossing the border and entering China several times. Both felt that public safety in the area was poor, given the fluid movement on the border between those trading and engaging in business. Some of these transactions were illegal. As in Case 2, Duong, Vu and Xuong also confirmed that narcotic issues were also significant in their areas: several people became addicted and subsequently, though the situation of drugs in their neighbourhood was not as serious as in the case of Co. As well, these participants claimed that other illegal activities – gambling, fighting, smuggling illegal goods into Vietnam – the theft and burglary took place on a regular basis.

The participants – Duong convicted for drug trafficking, Xuong for intentionally inflicting injury on other persons; Vu for extortion of property – found themselves in a milieu of lawlessness and under-enforcement. Xuong also admitted that he also broke the regulations (e.g. riding a motorbike without a valid licence or wearing a helmet) regularly without being handled.

\[\text{I did not have a driving licence, but I usually took my mother’s motorbike to go out with my friends. I never wore a helmet either. I also drank alcohol regularly when I was less than eighteen years old. However, I was never fined or dealt with because of these activities. Nobody cared about that.}\]

(Xuong – Case 30)

Similarly, Duong (Case 6) expressed surprise at being arrested, thinking such regulations were unimportant.

\[\text{I used to ride a motorbike without wearing a helmet in my province. I hardly ever took my driver license with me as well. Also, I sometimes went with my friends when carrying drugs with us, but nothing happened to me.}\]

(Duong – Case 6)

Giang (Case 8) admitted that social order in his area was not good. The area was dominated by several gangs; weapons were usually used in solving altercations in the area, including military and hunting guns. Trong (Case 24) similarly described an environment of lax order, ridden with theft, burglary, robbery and drugs. Gangs were also a dominant factor.
Gang members usually used weapons to fight against others. Some of them were arrested and prosecuted, but in general, my living area was not safe.

(Trong – Case 24)

Phuc (Case 16), Truong (Case 25) and Phuong (Case 18) were also involved with gangs and affected by their criminal activities. They all admitted that they were involved with gambling, violence and other illegal activities. All then committed violent crimes: Phuong killed a man, while Phuc attacked a man, causing him serious injuries. Truong (Case 25) was prosecuted for the crimes of robbery and illegally arresting and detaining another person as well. Therefore, all seemed to be significantly affected by the violent and criminal activities they had been exposed to before committing their offences.

7.5 Conclusion

In sum, the risk factors identified and discussed in this chapter were poverty and the economic conditions, the adverse influences of the internet and violent online games, and the role played by dysfunctional neighbourhoods. No direct connection between poverty and youth offending had been detected: most participants did not commit their offences because of poverty per se (except Co – Case 2), but it proved a significant socio-economic factor behind youth offending. Poverty had an elevating influence, increasing adverse effects of other risk factors, especially family risk factors such as child-rearing method, parent-child relationship, and parental involvement with their children lack discipline in the family and child neglect. This, in turn, multiplied the risk for offending of the young offenders.

Also, the negative influences of the internet and violent online games were identified as significant risk factors. Most of the offenders engaged in violent online games tended to have certain characteristics: be more risk-taking, violent, and aggressive, committing offences to fund their interest in games and the internet. Internet agencies were also identified to be an adverse socialising place for the young people, providing a forum to meet delinquent peers, witness or engage in violence, use or traffic in drugs and facilitate other criminal activities.

A broader social context was also noted: that of the dysfunctional neighbourhood without a strict police presence, the availability of drugs, firearms and other kinds offensive weapons significantly affected participants and their involvement in offending, given that several used drugs or committed drug-related crimes, while others used dangerous weapons including
swords, knives, daggers, and even guns to commit their offences. Violence in the community, gang affiliation and other illegal and criminal activities in the neighbourhoods were also identified as critical risk factors for youth offending.
Chapter Eight
Policing and Social Regulatory Mechanisms: the Perspectives of the Offenders and the Public Officers

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the factors related to policing and regulations generated from the life histories of the young offenders in Vietnam. The data collected from the interviews with the public officers regarding the risk factors for youth offending, youth offending prevention and the correction and rehabilitation of the young offenders in Vietnam, are also presented. All the public officers had been working for extended periods in particular departments related to the prevention, correction and rehabilitation of young offenders. The data collected from the life histories of the young offenders and the interviews with the public officers were combined to discuss perceived shortcomings in the prevention approaches towards youth offending in Vietnam – these, it is suggested, will be significant in improving the effectiveness of youth offending prevention in Vietnam.

8.2 Lack of appropriate policing and regulatory mechanisms

In previous chapters, we identified a matrix of risk factors that significantly influenced young people’s behaviours. The availability of drugs and weapons, the impact of the internet and games, especially violent online games, and exposure to violence, criminal activities and gang involvement had provided the background which might have explained the context of risk to youth crime. However, the investigation into these factors revealed that there was also a significant relationship between these issues and the nature of policing in several neighbourhoods. In light of these issues, the lack of appropriate policing might contribute to an increase in the seriousness and frequency of crimes, in turn influencing youth involvement in offending.

8.2.1 Handling of juveniles’ consumption of alcohol

In general, there was a lack of implementing the regulations of alcohol consumption among young people in many parts of the country. This led to serious issues of alcohol abuse among youth offenders. It was shown in the case studies that offenders who were involved in drinking were at a much higher risk of offending. It seemed that the regulation of alcohol
consumption only existed on paper but not always in practice. This was a significant issue for youth offending, given the ease of alcohol consumption and its admitted influence upon several interviewees when committing their offences. In several cases, alcohol abuse was the most significant risk factor (Hai – Case 12 and Xuong – Case 30). In these cases, alcohol affected the young people in committing the offences by increasing other risk factors, such as risk-taking behaviour and lack of self-control.

In 2008, the Vietnamese Government issued Decree No. 40/2008/ND-CP dealing with the production and sale of alcohol, which prohibited selling alcohol to anyone under eighteen years old. However, it was shown in most cases that this was not applied given the frequency the regulation was ignored by both sellers and consumers, making it easy for anyone to purchase alcohol. Many offenders admitted that they had started drinking when they were very young. Though early drinking may not necessarily lead to criminal acts, the ease of alcohol consumption might be a significant risk factor for offending among these interviewees.

Co (Case 2) admitted that he had started drinking when he was only six years old and many other children in his area drank when they were very young as well. However, such occurrences were considered normal in his community as he was from an ethnic minority, living in a remote mountainous area. It was common that people from such ethnic minority communities in Vietnam drank during their childhood. Co also admitted that he did not know about the prohibition against juvenile alcohol consumption.

Similarly, Xuong (Case 30), who was of Thai background, admitted that as with other children in his mountainous area, he took to drink early. His group was involved in several fights after drinking, including the case when they killed a man, which suggested possible influences between alcohol consumption and communal violence. He admitted that they usually drank as a socialising activity, but it seemed that alcohol had given them encouragement for fighting, especially in the instance they attacked and killed the victim. More importantly, Xuong explained that they never had any difficulty in buying wine and beer.

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However, the issue of alcohol consumption was common not only in the ethnic minority communities but also in many other areas, such as in the cases of Han (Case 10), Hoang (Case 11), Hai (Case 12), Nguyen (Case 15), Phuc (Case 16), Phuong (Case 18) and Tam (Case 21). These participants all admitted that they consumed alcohol from a young age. Tam (Case 21) started drinking when he was eleven years old while Han (Case 10) drank when he was twelve. Interestingly, all responded that no limitations to their alcohol drinking were enforced. Most did not know that they were not allowed to consume alcohol under the age of 18, while others (e.g. Hai and Phuong) admitted that they had seemingly heard of that regulation, but had never seen it applied.

In several cases, the participants even stressed that they were encouraged to consume alcohol by their parents or other adults. Hoang (Case 11) and Nguyen (Case 15) confided that their fathers consumed a lot of alcohol and that their fathers sometimes asked them to go to the pub to buy alcohol for them. This suggested a strong culture of alcohol consumption as a collective act affecting adults and children. The situation was complicated, as it was in Nguyen’s case (Case 15), by the nexus between violence and alcohol (Vien 2010).

> My father was very violent when he did not have alcohol to drink. He usually forced my mother to buy alcohol for him. I sometimes had to go to the pub to buy wine, though I hated him to drink... But when leaving school and going to work, I also went to the pub to drink myself.

(Nguyen – Case 15)

Likewise, Hoang admitted that his father usually asked him to help with the purchasing of alcohol, especially when guests visited his family. Hoang became involved with alcohol as a result of seeing his father drinking and buying alcohol for him.

> I was wondering why he loved alcohol like that... I guessed that it must be very delicious... So I sometimes secretly tasted the wine after buying it and I found that it was terrible. But after that, when I drank more regularly, I gradually got used to it.

(Hoang – Case 11)

The case of adult encouragement for alcohol consumption extended to teachers, who allowed the students to drink beer and wine, especially at school parties, as for example, Hai (Case
12) and Tam (Case 21). Tam admitted that he first drank beer at a party held by his teacher when he was eleven years old and she allowed the students to drink.

When I was in grade five, we went to my teacher’s house to visit her on the Vietnamese teacher’s day. She prepared a party for the whole class and we drank beer. However, the boys then drank too much and all were drunk.

(Tam – Case 21)

Similarly, in Case 12, Hai confided that he was drunk when committing his offence, after coming back from a party with his classmates and teachers. He also blamed alcohol as a significant factor in his offending, given that he attacked the police.

8.2.2 The management of games, the internet and other social media

In most cases of involvement with the internet and violent online games, the participants admitted that there was a lack of monitoring and management with the use of the internet (from both the authorities and the owners of internet agencies), leaving them free to do whatever they wanted online without being interrupted. The internet agencies became a place where the juvenile could be exposed to many circumstances, such as violence, pornography, drugs, gangs and criminal activities. The management and policing with regard to the provision of internet services was rather ineffective, suggesting a broader problem. In many cases, participants admitted that they could stay in the internet agencies overnight or even several days, thereby bypassing traditional family and authority scrutiny. According to the regulations outlined by the Vietnamese Government, all internet agencies have to close before midnight each evening. However, not many agencies obeyed this regulation and still allowed customers to continue playing after this time, in many cases even through the entire night. Gamers would often dodge the online gamer curfew in Vietnam by engaging in secret behind closed doors at night. In this study, most participants admitted that they never saw anyone come and police the opening hours of the internet agencies, so they could stay at the internet agency as long as they wanted. Long’s case (Case 14) is a case in point. He remarked about how he was involved with the internet:

73 Decree No. 72/2013/ND-CP of July 15, 2013, on the management, provision and use of Internet services and online information.
75 Online gamers adapt to curfew - http://vietnamnews.vn/society/204715/online-gamers-adapt-to-curfew.html#We6aSsQQer15uSLr.97
I usually stayed in the internet agencies for the whole night to play games. The owners usually pretended to shut the shop at midnight when they turned off the lights and closed the doors. All players could still stay inside and access the internet, watch films or play games during the night.

(Long – Case 14)

Most participants also admitted to having unlimited access to sites irrespective of content, which meant that they were exposed to material that might have posed further risk factors. For instance, all participants admitted that they could access numerous websites containing violent and pornographic materials such as films, videos, and photos. According to the interviewed sample, the owners of the internet agencies could not control access to this kind of material, and nor did they care about the contents that customers accessed. Not only those who committed rape (Anh – Case 1 and Trung – Case 26), but also many other offenders admitted that they could easily access pornographic websites, without restriction or prevention. The ease of accessing such websites might have increased the likelihood of their involvement in offending.

Anh admitted that with a set of headphones, he could easily watch porn videos unhindered, poising no actual disruption to the owners and managers of the internet agencies. Turning a blind eye to the browsing history of the young customers would be commonplace.

I usually chose a computer in the corner with the monitor facing the wall, so the owner could not see what I was doing. The owner never came to see what people were doing in the store. I knew that several others also watched porn videos.

(Anh – Case 1)

Similarly, Hai (Case 12) said that he sometimes watched pornography. He also admitted that most owners did not care about the nature of the internet activity.
Watching porn videos was common in the internet agencies. I never saw the owner warning anyone about that. They just stayed at the front, waiting for customers so that they could earn money. They did not care about what we were doing there.

(Hai – Case 12)

It seemed that there was no effort made by the authorities, as gathered from the interview sample, to prevent children from engaging with porn and other harmful material from the internet. It was clear that the local authorities and the internet agencies did not have the mechanisms to distinguish the age of the viewers and the content being viewed, thus significantly influencing the young viewers.

8.2.3 The management of firearms, weapons and other special support tools

Though Vietnam has legislative controls regarding the use of firearms, weapons and special support tools (e.g. handcuffs, electric clubs) the responses from the interview sample showed there were still significant problems with weapons management. From the offenders’ histories, it is evident that dangerous weapons were readily available and used by the offenders to commit their crimes. This caused significant harm to victim, as well as to the general social order, especially with regard to violent and serious crimes.

Many participants said that it was not difficult to buy knives, swords, daggers, scimitars and even guns. Some even used these dangerous weapons to commit their offences, such as Hai (Case 12) who used a shotgun in a fight with another group. The availability of weapons was even higher near the borders with China and Laos when many kinds of weapons could be found in the public market (T Dang 2011). Guns could be bought as easily as buying vegetables in a market on the border between Vietnam and China (Duc Nam 2012) and a ‘home delivery service’ was also available with the purchase of guns and knives (Vietnamnet 2012). The interview sample confirmed this widespread problem, suggesting that many of the offenders were also participants, and victims, in this milieu.

According to Van (Case 28), the area he grew up in was one with poor legal administrative control over the use of such weapons in the resolution of disputes between gangs.
I normally saw people in my area using weapons when fighting, such as knives, swords and even guns. I believe that several people still have guns and other firearms or supportive equipment. Swords, knives and other dangerous weapons could be bought easily as well.

(Van – Case 28)

This was consistent with the findings of DM Nguyen (2014) who concluded that there was a significant weakness in controlling the access and circulation of dangerous weapons, making it easy for young offenders to find and use these weapons to commit serious crimes. Moreover, weapons trading and use were also significantly related to the narcotic trade. The connection between them is unmistakable. Drug offenders usually readied their weapons in the anticipation of being arrested, as well as protecting themselves from rival drug dealers and gangs. Several drug dealers even used military weapons as a promotion for those who bought drugs from them (HS Pham 2015). Consequently, nearly 20 years following the establishment of the Vietnamese Anti-Drugs Police Force, seventeen officers have lost their lives in performing their tasks (Department of Combating Drugs Crimes 2016).

8.2.4 Response to crimes and others illegal activities

The life history interviews revealed a general under-enforcement of various rules and regulations. Several participants were significantly influenced by the availability of drugs and some of them committed drug crimes or other offences to fund their need for drugs. A significant problem was the ease with which drugs could be obtained, suggesting regions with a thriving illicit drug market. This had direct effects on the youth population. For instance, in Case 14 (Long), a 14-year-old boy could buy drugs to use and sell over an extended period without being detected and arrested. Nevertheless, such occurrences happened in many parts of Vietnam, including Hanoi, where there was an evident ease of sale, purchase and consumption of drugs76.

It was evident from the interview sample that other types of crimes also happened regularly, but not all were consistently handled. Several participants admitted that there were serious fights in their areas, in which people were severely injured, but the offenders were not prosecuted. Some participants were also involved in severe and regular offending, but they

were only processed under the Law of Administrative Violation Handling, which seemed not to be suitably strict and efficient, given that many of the offenders continued their criminal activities after the process.

Several types of illegal activities – including gambling, prostitution and violation of traffic laws – were also recorded. These instances showed a conspicuous lack of policing. Several participants admitted that their attitude to disobeying the traffic law (driving without licences and wearing helmets) was relaxed as long as law enforcement was not effective. Xuong (Case 30) admitted that most of the boys of his age (15 years old) in the area usually rode motorbikes even though they were not old enough to hold driving licences. Moreover, they never wore helmets when doing so and were never pulled over by local authorities for this. Similarly, Duong (Case 6) was stopped by the traffic police in Hanoi when riding a motorbike without a registration plate, which he explained was normal in his area. It could be argued that the lack of adequate policing with these infractions of the law led to the young offenders’ ignoring of the legal regulations. A general impression that legal regulations were under-enforced was seen in these cases.

Gang affiliation and their illegal activities were also evident in many cases (e.g. Phuc – Case 16, Phuong – Case 18 and Thang – Case 22), but attempts by the local authorities to deal with these gangs were rarely recorded. The issue of gang involvement could be clearly seen in cases of school violence in this study, in which the participants admitted that gangs were commonplace in their school and that no effective strategy was in place to deal with them (e.g. Giang – Case 8 and Tam – Case 21).

Similarly, domestic violence, especially between parents, was serious in several cases, but none of the participants mentioned the external involvement of any local authorities in solving the problem. Case 15 (Nguyen) was a particular example of persistent violence in his family by his father against his wife and children, which resulted in murder when Nguyen killed his father to protect his mother. Surprisingly, he admitted that all the people in the village knew of his family’s circumstances, but they did not have a sense that some intervention was warranted. Nguyen also admitted that not only his family but also other households in the area experienced domestic violence. Domestic violence, already a problem outlined in the findings on family risk factors domain, was not discouraged by external authorities.
8.3 Public officers’ perspectives

The interviews with the public officers regarding youth offending in general also revealed valuable information related to the risk factors for youth offending, as well as the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of young offenders from their personal experience of dealing with young offenders. Their views shed light on perspectives about law enforcement and risk factors, highlighting various limitations. These interviews revealed a limited understanding of the risk factors for youth offending from the viewpoints of public officers, though they mentioned how, in their opinion, many risk factors in different domains might be relevant.

These officers were all from the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) or the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). All eight interviewees were working in particular departments related to the prevention of youth offending, re-education and rehabilitation of young offenders. The information these experienced officers provided was used to supplement data collected from the life history interviews of young offenders. It was important to note the likely presence of institutional bias. For that very reason, this information was critical to understanding youth offending in Vietnam from the public officers’ perspectives. It was important in revealing how much such officers appreciate the role of risk factors as a paradigm in dealing with youth crime. The interviews with the public officers’ also unearthed significant information about the prevention of youth offending and the re-education and rehabilitation of the young offenders in Vietnam, given that the young offenders did not provide pertinent information about these activities.

8.3.1 Risk factors for youth offending from the public officers’ perspectives

Similar to the findings from the life history interviews, several risk factors for youth offending were identified as relevant from the perspectives of the public officers. These factors were categorised under five headings: individual characteristics, family circumstances, school-related factors, peer influence and other community risk factors. These are elaborated in the following subsections.

8.3.1.1 Individual characteristics

In terms of individual risk factors, all the interviewees felt that the juveniles had particular characteristics that might have affected their behaviour and criminal activities. They
explained that young people were commonly less mature, and as a consequence usually did things impetuously without thoroughly thinking through or considering the consequences of their actions, and that this was the primary reason for their involvement in offending.

“These young people are not mature enough to foresee the consequences of their activities, so many of them expressed regret after committing their offences. Most of them did not think much about the reason and consequence.”

(PO 05)

Impulsiveness was also mentioned as a risk factor for youth offending by five interviewees (62.5%).

“These young people are very impulsive. Many of them tried to show their capability and ability by doing dangerous and challenging things.”

(PO 06)

Officer No. 05 also stressed the impact of a lack of self-control and risk-taking behaviour among young offenders as a common and significant risk factor for their offending.

“In general, they could not control themselves well, especially when being stimulated by the situation or other people. We have seen many cases in which the offenders committed serious offences because of a minor conflict.”

(PO 05)

According to the interviewed officer sample, young people who are characteristically aggressive or violent were also considered to be at higher risk of offending, especially in the committal of violent and serious crimes.

“In the cases of violent crimes, most offenders demonstrated violent and aggressive behaviour not only when committing their offences, but also in their daily routine. There might be a link between such conduct and their criminal activities.”

(PO 03)

Several officers also mentioned substance abuse when talking about the risk factors for youth offending. They stressed that the young people who were drug addicted were at a
significantly higher risk of offending, given that Vietnam is facing serious problems related to drug addiction.

*Drug addiction is a significant risk factor for youth offending. Several offenders committed drug-related crimes while others committed other types, but they all needed money to fund the need for drugs. Moreover, these offenders are also usually more daring, violent and aggressive, especially after using drugs or when they are in need of drugs.*

(PO 04)

However, in general, individual issues were not stressed as the most significant risk factors, as most officers blamed other agents of influence, such as school and family risk factors, for having more adverse impacts on the individuals and increasing the likelihood of their offending.

Officer No. 02 explained that young offenders might have issues with their behaviour and characteristics, which could relate to their offending. But he also suggested that these might not be the primary reason for their involvement in offending: other extraneous factors such as lack of parental care and supervision or family circumstances could play a strong role in influencing the development of youth offending. Importantly, Officer No. 02 even insisted that such youth offenders be deemed victims.

*We should not blame juveniles for their offending, as they were rather victims of circumstances. I mean that they were affected by other factors, especially the family situations. If they had had a happy family and caring parents, I think that they would never have committed their offences.*

(PO 02)

Similarly, Officer No. 07 pointed out that peer influence could multiply the risk of youth offending, regardless of their characteristics.
Many offenders only engaged in criminal activities after joining their friends, especially in the cases in which there were problems in the family. Therefore, it might not be because of their personal characteristics, but the influence of peers and lack of care from family, which led to their involvement in offending.

(PO 07)

Officers No. 02 and No. 07 seemed to have a better understanding of the risk factors for youth offending than others, because they could see the young offenders as ‘victims of circumstance’, a situational context which reflected a broader understanding of the young offenders in the overall context of their lives. What these officers were observing was that extraneous factors and situational factors could be considered compounding matters behind risk. This view is in sharp contrast to most other officers who preferred to focus on individual characteristics as the most significant risk factors for youth offending.

8.3.1.2 Family circumstances

Regarding family risk factors, all eight officers (100%) agreed that the family unit played a significant part in youth development as well as their involvement in offending, and considered that family-related issues were the most important risk factors for youth offending.

From my experience, there was a high proportion of young offenders who came from ‘problem’ families, or they were affected by disadvantaged family circumstances, such as family conflict, domestic violence, broken home or homelessness. In general, family circumstances have a very strong influence on young people and their crimes.

(PO 02)

Officer No. 01 also stressed that family issues were the most important factor affecting young people’s development, being the root of children’s misbehaviour.

Youth offending is directly affected by the issues in the family. Many parents do not care or supervise the children properly. Some others spoil their kids too much. Family conflict and divorce are also important in youth offending development.

(PO 01)
• **Family conflict environment, domestic violence and disrupted family life**

The participant sample focused on family conflict and domestic violence. Six officers mentioned these factors (75%).

*Family environment is essential for the development of the children. Therefore, a family with conflict and violence will negatively affect young people's behaviour. Many juvenile delinquents come from households with these problems.*

(PO 08)

Similarly, Officer No. 07, who had experience in working with children in conflict with the law, stated that violence in the family significantly affected the children:

*Interparental violence is also common in many families. Young people usually do not know how to solve this issue and try to ignore it. However, domestic violence may significantly affect the children’s ties to family and parents.*

(PO 07)

In terms of broken homes, all the officers agreed that parental divorce was a significant risk factor for youth offending. Officer No. 2 stressed the severe impacts of divorce on the children.

*Divorce usually results from sustained periods of family conflict and violence. The children would be seriously influenced when witnessing their parents’ conflict and divorce. They are not likely to grow up properly in a broken family.*

(PO 02)

Similarly, other officers also acknowledged the adverse impact of divorce on the children. Some referred to the consequences of divorce and their influence on the likelihood of youth offending.
Divorced parents usually do not provide enough care and supervision with their children. The relationship between parents and children usually gets worse after the divorce as well. Therefore, children will be at a higher risk of offending after their parents’ divorce.

(PO 01)

- **Inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision**

From their perspective, most officers stated that the discipline in the family might have substantial effects on young people and their behaviour. Over half of them (five participants) argued that the presence of too harsh punishment and violence from parents toward their children could be strong predictors of youth offending. Three others (37.5%) were of a different persuasion, claiming that strict control was necessary to make sure that the children would obey their parents completely. Officer No. 07 even stated that corporal punishment had its uses.

The discipline in the family is vital to ensure children’s good behaviour. Parents should be strict with their children and corporal punishment may sometimes be used when necessary. However, I do not mean that parents should abuse this discipline with their children.

(PO 07)

Several officers explained that strict discipline was necessary within the family unit, but did not support corporal punishment. Officer No. 02 stressed that corporal punishment did not bring stable and long-term effects and it could even lead to unwanted outcomes.

Beating children only shows the adverse effects. Children will not respect their parents because of that. Some become resistant to corporal punishment, or they even resist their parents.

(PO 02)

On the other hand, several participants regarded lax discipline as an important risk factor. Interestingly, one officer even stressed that lax discipline, especially in context of a wealthy family, was among the most significant risk factors for youth offending.
Children from wealthy families are usually spoiled, especially when they are the only child. They are generally allowed to do whatever they want and to have everything they need. This is one of the most significant factors for their involvement in later offending.

(PO 01)

In terms of parental care and supervision, all eight staff (100%) stressed that these factors were significantly important for the development of children and the lack of parental supervision is a high risk for young people to be involved in offending.

Many of the young offenders lacked supervision before they committed their crimes. In other cases, though parents cared about supervising their children, they could not follow them all the time. So, these kids finally lacked supervision from their parents.

(PO 07)

When mentioning this risk factor, most officers blamed the financial condition (poverty) of the family as the reason for the lack of parental supervision.

Many young offenders came from low-income families where parents were very busy with working on earning a living. So, they did not have enough time to take care and supervise the children.

(PO 02)

- **Lack of parental involvement and parent-child relationship**

Four officers (50%) suggested that – from their experience of dealing with young offenders – the involvement of parents with their children was minimal, especially when they were busy working.

Some parents did not have enough time for their children. They usually relied on other people such as grandparents or babysitters to take care of their children. Others relied on teachers, so they hardly cared about what their kids were doing at school.

(PO 06)
Another officer also reflected on lifestyle choices and indicated that many parents spent too much time on working despite having sufficient income.

*I do not think that they focused on working because of poverty, as many of these parents had a good economic situation. However, they still did not provide enough supervision to their children, as they wanted to spend time to earn more.*

(PO 02)

Officer No. 01 concluded that lack of a parent-child relationship was generally common among young offenders, and he blamed parents for that:

*In general, most young offenders did not have a good relationship with their parents and they were not close to their family. This issue was mostly because their parents did not spend enough time to take care of them.*

(PO 01)

Officer No. 03 went further in pointing out that a poor parent-child relationship also led to youths running away from home, which in turn put young people at higher risks of offending.

*I have met many young offenders who admitted that they felt uncomfortable and they did not want to stay at home. There was a tendency to leave home among these offenders. During the period of leaving home, they joined their antisocial friends and became involved in youth offending.*

(PO 03)

Officers No. 01 and No. 02 also stressed that parent-child relationships and the involvement of parents with their children are, in their opinion, the most important factors ensuring that the children would not become involved in antisocial and criminal activities. These officers concluded that in most cases, parents did not fulfil their duty of care and supervision with their children, which resulted in youth offending.
Most young offenders I have dealt with did not receive enough care and supervision before committing their crimes. Some of them dropped out of school while others spent several days at the internet agencies playing games, but their parents did not know or care. In other cases, the children left home and joined delinquent peers and gangs, but their parents did not know until they committed their offences.

(PO 02)

8.3.1.3 School-related issues

In terms of school-related factors, all officers agreed that school was very important to ensure students’ proper development and well-being, but further suggested that students might be affected by adverse issues in the school environment, such as school violence or truancy. They suggested that what children needed was a positive and functional school environment, not a dysfunctional and dangerous one.

Together with family, school is also one of the most important places for the development of children. However, we have to admit that there are still serious problems related to school dysfunction [in Vietnam], such as violence in school. These issues may negatively affect the students.

(PO 02)

Though they did not directly claim that school connectedness was a risk factor for youth offending, most officers agreed that young offenders were not likely to be bonded to their school. Officer No. 04 concluded that young offenders normally dislike their school environments, and a high proportion of them dropped out of school early prior to committing their offences.

Most of the young offenders did not focus on studying and their marks were usually not very good. Dropping out of school was also very common among them. Our reports had shown that nearly a half of the young offenders had left school before committing their offences.

(PO 04)
Those officers pointed out that school-related problems might affect students and increase the likelihood of their offending. Five officers (62.5%) suggested that school violence was a serious issue in Vietnam, therefore constituting an important risk factor for youth offending. There were reflections about an increasingly dangerous and violent school environment that had developed over the years.

School had changed a lot and it is not as safe as in the past. Students regardless of gender seemed to be involved in fighting more regularly. It is understandable that young people are more likely to be involved in offending, especially violent and serious crimes.

(PO 03)

Similarly, officer No. 07 also stressed the seriousness of school violence in Vietnam.

My son also complained that there were groups in his school and they sometimes gathered to beat other students. Though there had never been any serious case of school violence, several students were excluded because of fighting. However, the situation of school violence is much more serious in many other schools.

(PO 07)

Several other officers also linked school violence with other related issues, such as gangs in school, dropping out of school or school expulsion.

It is not just fighting between the children; it is much more serious when many students use dangerous weapons to attack others. I knew several cases in which students did not dare to come back to school because of fear of being beaten, so they had to move or leave school.

(PO 08)

In terms of the relationship between school violence and other antisocial activities, at least three officers (37.5%) argued that students who usually fought in school were also more likely to be involved with violent and aggressive behaviours outside the school environment. To that ends, school violence was deemed a critical factor for youth offending.
When the students get familiar with violence at their school, they are more likely to be involved in other antisocial activities, especially violent and criminal activities.

(PO 06)

The officers mentioned several other school-related risk factors, including truancy, dropping out of school and expulsion from school. Most did not think that these factors had a direct bearing on influencing young offenders in committing their offences. Most officers preferred to focus on school management issues as the main reason which in turn led to the other school issues that negatively affected young people. For instance, officer No. 02 argued that inconsistent school discipline might significantly increase the risk of offending among students. She contended that school expulsion was not an effective tool of school discipline and could even bring about significantly adverse outcomes.

Expulsion is quite common in many schools because of either academic or behaviour problems. However, the students who are expelled even have more time to join delinquent peers and groups, which might put them at a higher risk of offending.

(PO 02)

Officer No. 01, on the other hand, focused on the appropriateness of what students should have in school, namely appropriate forms of entertainment and leisure activities suitable for their age.

Juveniles need appropriate activities when going to school. However, most schools only focused on teaching and studying but not on other activities. Some schools have thousands of students but only one playground, so how can students play or relax after their lessons?

(PO 01)

This idea was supported by officers No. 02, No. 04 and No. 05 when they also mentioned that children at school were under significant pressure and that there was a lack of entertainment facilities and activities in schools. Moreover, officer No. 02 also pointed out that the curriculum was inadequate in not focusing on skills training for students.
Young people are immature and they usually lack experience and life skills. However, necessary skills are rarely taught in schools, as they only focus on academic subjects. This leads to a lack of experience and social skills among students.

(PO 02)

Officer No. 01 stressed the lack of a support network for youth in the learning environment, such as proper counselling services in the school. He argued that young people might face numerous issues related to health, psychology, relationships and well-being, but they did not receive any psychological support or guidance at school when having problems:

Children are in the process of development with many physical and psychological changes. During this process, they will be in difficult circumstances and they need supports. However, they could hardly find any support or counselling from their school and teachers.

(PO 01)

Officer No. 02 also added that while many students lacked support from family, they also failed to find support in the school environment. More importantly, the cooperation between school and family in managing and educating children was limited, which suggested a breakdown of the cooperative links:

The cooperation between school and family was limited. Teachers only focused on teaching while parents focused on working, but they both did not care about the students’ well-being.

(PO 02)

Similarly, officers No. 05, No. 06 and No. 08 all mentioned the cooperation between school, family and other social organisations as a significant factor in educating and supervising young people in their development. However, they admitted that this cooperation was still limited and ineffectual and was a reason that problems arose among young people.

According to the officer sample, the issues at school were treated as a different factor of influence. While many young offenders also mentioned the importance of school, hardly any of them saw school issues as risk factors for their offending. Most public officers interviewed
in the sample thought otherwise, stating that school issues such as truancy, school violence, dropping out of school or expulsion might increase the likelihood of youth offending. The problem was compounded when young people were not well supervised by their parents; they had more chance to associate with delinquent peers and become involved in antisocial behaviour when they were out of school.

8.3.1.4 Influence of peers

When asked if there was a significant influence by peers on other young people and the likelihood of their offending, all eight officers (100%) responded without any hesitation that the negative influence from peers was vital in most cases of youth offending. They insisted that most young offenders were influenced by their peers when involved in antisocial activities, while some committed their offences jointly with their peers.

Officer No. 03 stressed that peer-related risk factors were critical in a youth’s involvement in offending.

The influence of peers, especially the ‘bad friends’, is significant to young people and their participation in offending. Many young offenders only committed offences after joining with their delinquent peers. So, peer influence was the most important risk factor in many cases of offending.

(PO 03)

Similarly, officer No. 04 added that young people usually committed crimes with others, especially those who were in the same age group.

From our reports, over half of the young offenders committed offences together with their friends. Thus, there should be a very strong influence from peers on youth offending.

(PO 04)

However, several participants also argued that the influence of peers was mediated by the characteristics of young people, who were not considered mature and experienced (PO 02). Officer No. 01 also noted that it was not easy for the young people to resist pressure or incitement from peers.
Young people normally lack the ability to refuse when being incited by peers, even in committing crimes. They also quickly follow what their friends do, such as playing games, gambling, smoking, drinking and using drugs, though in several cases their friends did not encourage them to do that.

(PO 01)

In agreeing with this idea, officers No. 04 and No. 08 added that pressure from peers was, in their opinion, also significant to young people as far as it created an environment of forced competitiveness:

They usually imitate what their friends do, or try to get what their friends have. They also try to follow and compete with their friends. Several young offenders committed offences just to demonstrate that they were as brave as their buddies.

(PO 08)

In general, there was a difference between the young offenders and the public officers in understanding and evaluating the peer influence on youth offending, though both groups of participants stressed peer influence as significant risk factors. Many young offenders in the interviewed sample saw such peer influence as an important factor that influenced their behaviour. Several even stated that they would never have committed their offences if they had not been involved with their friends. Similarly, most public officers believed that peer influence could increase the likelihood of risk that offending might take place, but this only happened in concert with other risk factors, especially family factors. Some argued that the children only get involved with their delinquent friends and criminal activities when they lacked parental care and supervision. Therefore, peer influence might not be as important as parental supervision in contributing to youth offending.

8.3.1.5 Community risk factors

In terms of community risk factors for youth offending, all eight participants (100%) mentioned several impacts arising from other social issues. They explained that social risk factors might have a strong impact on the young people and their offending as well. The most common social risk factors mentioned by the staff were the place of residence; prevalence of violence and crimes in the community; adverse impacts from games and the internet; and, the
changing nature of Vietnamese society.

The importance of the living environment was mentioned by two groups of officers. The first one said that living in urban areas might be linked with a higher risk of offending as many young offenders committed their crimes in the cities while a lower proportion of juvenile offenders committed offences in the countryside.

*According to our statistics, the rate of youth offending in rural areas is lower than in the cities. Moreover, numbers of young offenders only committed offences when they moved to live in the urban areas. So, those who live in the cities may be at a higher risk of youth offending.*

(PO 07)

The other officers, however, focused on the socio-economic disadvantages of rural residents and their impacts on youth offending.

*People living in rural, mountainous and remote areas are usually poor and lack legal knowledge. They may commit their offences because they do not know the regulations related to their crimes, or at least they did not realise how serious their activities were.*

(PO 02)

In agreement, officer No. 04 added that it was common for youth living in rural and mountainous areas to commit offences without having a sense of legal responsibilities, also noting the presence of disadvantage.

*I had seen several cases, especially in rural and ethnic minority areas, when the young offenders were punished for the crime of robbery, but they had never thought that they were committing crimes. Therefore, youth living in rural areas may be disadvantaged and this may increase the risk of their offending.*

(PO 04)

However, the remaining four officers argued that the location of residents did not affect the likelihood of youth offending; the primary influence lay elsewhere, notably their involvement in antisocial activities and delinquent peers.
The issue is not rural or urban location, but whether they were involved with violent games, drugs and criminal activities or delinquent peers. Not only youth from urban areas but those who lived in rural areas committed serious crimes.

(PO 07)

In supporting the statement of officer No. 07, other participants took a strong institutional line arguing that violence, drugs and criminal activities in the neighbourhood could significantly increase the likelihood of youth offending.

*It is clear that young people living in the neighbourhoods with problems are more likely to be involved in antisocial behaviour and offending themselves. They can see and learn the ‘bad’ things from other people living around. Therefore, it is not strange that children being exposed to social problems like drugs, gambling, delinquency and crimes then committed offences.*

(PO 06)

Violent online games and internet use were also mentioned by six officers (75.0%) as having negative impacts on young people and their offending. Officer No. 05 referred to the seriousness of game addiction among the young people, even going so far as to compare games with drugs

*I was very surprised when seeing children being addicted to games. They could not think or do any other thing except games and games. Though their parents tried to stop them from playing games (some even beat the children seriously), it did not work. In this way, games addiction is very similar to drugs addiction.*

(PO 05)

Officer No. 04 blamed violent games as the most important risk factors for offending among those who were highly involved in games and the internet. He explained that there was a cycle of games engagement and offending among young people when feeding a habit to play games, needing money in turn thus providing an incentive to offend.
We have seen many cases of serious crimes, in which the offenders were highly involved in violent games and the internet. In most of these cases, the offenders committed offences to fund the games and access to the internet. They even dared to kill their relatives, neighbours or other people for money.

(PO 04)

Similarly, officer No. 02 suggested a significant relationship between violent game involvement and serious offences committed by the young people.

**Most games that children play are related to violence and they are affected by games. Many young people who were involved in games then committed severe offences. So there may be a relationship between games and violent behaviour.**

(PO 02)

Three participants (37.5%) argued that the process of economic reform in Vietnam was changing society and had significant impacts on family and individuals, leading to changes in the family, lifestyle, the relationships between people and many other areas of society. These often disruptive changes also resulted in other social issues, including crimes and youth offending. Officer No. 01 concluded that these societal transformations had provided background risks to youth offending:

**I believe that the changing society in Vietnam is the root of numerous issues. For example, the family ties and the relationship between parents and children in the family had changed significantly in comparison with the past. Parents seemed to focus much more on earning money while children do not respect their parents and teachers as they did in the past.**

(PO 01)

It was noted that the young offenders hardly mentioned social factors as risk factors for their offending while most officers regarded them as significant. For instance, most officers claimed that the involvement with online games had had significant impacts on young people and their offending. Nevertheless, most young offenders did not consider game engagement a risk factor for their offending, though some admitted that there were negative impacts from games.
In general, the interviews with the public officers revealed particular perspectives on risk factors for youth offending. Though there were many similarities in understanding the risk factors for youth offending between young offenders and the public officers, there were certain differences (e.g. negative influence of online games). However, based on the accounts collected from juvenile offenders, the risk factors mentioned by the public officers were generally consistent with the factors identified from the life histories of the young offenders. For example, while several offenders claimed to have parental care, their stories suggested a lack of parental supervision. This, in turn, led to increased involvement with delinquent peers, which then placed them in an environment ripe for offending. This was consistent with the public officers’ perspectives about the role of family and parental supervision. Therefore, data collected from interviews with the officers was ultimately useful for better understanding of the risk factors for youth offending.

8.3.2 Youth offending prevention, correction and rehabilitation of the young offenders

8.3.2.1 Youth offending prevention

Regarding youth offending prevention, all eight participants acknowledged its importance. They commented that the Vietnamese government and its departments and regulatory bodies had made strenuous efforts to intervene and prevent crimes and illegal activities among the young population.

I think that there has been a significant focus of the government on youth offending prevention. We all know that in the National Program of Combating Crimes, there was a separate project which focused on crimes that targeted children and offences committed by young people (Project IV). Reports of this project are still annually issued by the MPS.

(PO 04)

In general, they agreed that intervention in youth offending in Vietnam had achieved considerable results. However, there were disagreements in evaluating the effectiveness of youth offending prevention programs. At least two officers (25.0%) stressed their effectiveness and this had resulted in the reduction of crimes committed by young people.
I think the results of these programs are significant and should be acknowledged. The rate of youth offending has been reduced stably and significantly in recent years. The reports from the MPS had shown that numbers of both youth offending cases and young offenders were reduced several years recently.

(PO 03)

Officer No. 04 also added that, in his opinion, the intervention programs for youth offending had contributed well to the control of youth committing crimes.

If there had not been such intervention and prevention, the rate of crime committed by young people should have been much higher. Authorities and the police force had applied many effective methods to control youth offending. Although there were limitations of dealing with youth crimes, I think we could not deny the achievements of these programs.

(PO 04)

Though acknowledging the decrease in numbers of crimes committed by young people, three officers (37.5%) argued that the seriousness of the offences had increased dramatically. For instance, officer No. 01 claimed that.

Young offenders seem to be much more violent and daring recently in comparison with several years ago. The numbers of youth crimes might decrease in some places, but the seriousness of youth offending has not decreased. Prevention of youth offending seems not to be effective.

(PO 01)

Several officers identified a group factor, claiming that young people commonly cooperated with others to commit their offences, and numerous young people joined gangs and committed offences with other members of the groups.
Young people running away from home and joining gangs has become very common. There are gangs in schools as well. They all learned bad behaviour from other members of the gangs. Thus, it is not strange that many young offenders committed serious crimes in cooperation with other gang members.

(PO 06)

When asked about the reasons for youth offending situations, all officers admitted that there were still limitations in the prevention of youth offending from the authorities, communities, families and schools and especially the police force. Half of the participants (all police officers) saw the role of police as the most important factors in controlling and preventing youth crimes, though they also stressed the need for cooperation between the authorities, community, families and school in dealing with youth offending.

We need to combine all possible measures to prevent youth crimes. However, specialised intervention measures of the police force are the most important to reduce youth offending.

(PO 04)

However, two other officers (25.0%) said that the prevention of youth offending would not be effective if it was conducted exclusively by the police force, while two others stressed that community and family prevention measures were far more important than the intervention from the police force. They argued that police could only focus on the young people when they had been involved in illegal activities, at which stage intervention would be less important, if not futile. Officer No. 02 argued that intervention and prevention of youth offending tended to be late, which led to blunting the effectiveness of dealing with youth offending.

It is better to prevent young people from being involved in criminal activities than try to follow them after they have committed offences. However, we usually focus on at-risk youth while not concentrating on preventing them from being at risk of offending. So these prevention programs have been shown to be very efficient.

(PO 02)
To add support to this idea, officer No. 01 added that the community and families could intervene much earlier by preventing young people from being involved in criminal activities. This pointed to the importance of centring other agents in attempting to prevent youth crime, rather than exclusively relying on the police or justice system.

*Prevention strategies undertaken by the police and the judicial systems are necessary. However, good cooperation between community, family and school is much more important to prevent youth offending.*

(PO 01)

Another issue, which was mentioned by several participants as a reason for ineffective intervention and prevention of youth offending, was the punishment applied to young offenders. When asked about the appropriateness of punishment against juvenile offenders, three officers (37.5%) argued that it was not strict enough to prevent young people from committing crimes. In other words, such officers were suggesting a particular philosophy of punishment and deterrence in dealing with youth crime, dependent on use of state force. Officer No. 04 stated that the punishment for the young offenders was so light that it would not help in preventing youth offending.

*Regardless of how serious their offences are, the highest punishment applied for them will only be 18 years of incarceration, just because they are juveniles. Many young offenders are not afraid of being punished when they commit their offences. So, heavier sentences should be a solution.*

(PO 04)

Two officers (25%), keeping with this punitive theme, also suggested reducing the age of criminal responsibility, as many young offenders were not punished because they were not old enough.

*People less than 14 years old will not be punished for any crime regardless of the seriousness of their activities. This is not appropriate, as many offenders will not be punished. The age of criminal responsibility should be lowered to make sure that these offenders will be punished for their offences.*

(PO 07)
However, other respondents argued that the punishment applied for young offenders was not lax, as it was even higher than penal regimes in several other countries.

*I do not think that these sentences are light. They are even more severe than punishment applied for juveniles in many other countries. Therefore, increasing sentences or reducing the age of criminal responsibility for young offenders will not be effective in preventing their offending.*

(PO 02)

Moreover, officer No. 01 even stressed that serious punishment was not a suitable solution in dealing with juvenile offenders.

*I am sure that youth offending will not be reduced even if we increase the seriousness of the punishment. Serious punishment will not work with young offenders. Education in family and community will be much better.*

(PO 01)

In general, most officers acknowledged the overall effectiveness of youth offending prevention in Vietnam though there were disagreements about the degree of effectiveness. Several officers pointed out that the punishment and handling of juvenile offenders were inconsistent and suggested increased punishment regimes as well as reducing the age of criminal responsibility. However, others said that it was not effective due to a lack of appropriate measures. Notably, they argued that using severe punishment and jailing juvenile offenders were not effective in dealing with youth offending. They recommended in targeting the importance of the role of family and community in preventing youth offending.

8.3.2.2 Correction and rehabilitation of young offenders

In terms of the correction and rehabilitation of young offenders, there were disagreements between the interviewees when evaluating the effectiveness of dealing with young offenders. While all the interviewees who worked in the TC8 claimed the incarceration, re-education, and rehabilitation of young offenders to be effective, other participants expressed different points of views.
As the primary focus of this study was the incarcerated young offenders, the public officers were also asked about the effectiveness of jailing juvenile offenders in the prevention of youth offending. This gave rise to contrasting viewpoints from officers on the appropriateness of juvenile incarceration, with some claiming that jailing juveniles was effective while others disagreed. Four participants (50%) from the TC8 claimed that jailing juvenile offenders was necessary to not only punish but also re-educate them. They also argued that the incarceration of juvenile offenders was effective in the prevention of youth offending.

They are criminals and should be punished for their crimes. Moreover, during the incarceration, they will have chances to review their criminal activities and re-educate themselves. They are trained to work and are taught essential skills as well.

(PO 07)

Officer No. 08 also argued that incarceration of young offenders was effective in preventing youth offending as well as in preventing recidivism among young offenders.

Though there were several issues with the incarceration of young offenders, I personally believe that this process is effective. The prisoners will not dare to commit crimes again as they do not want to come back to prison, while others also try to avoid being incarcerated by not committing crimes.

(PO 08)

Four other officers expressed concerns about the adverse impacts of jailing juvenile offenders, though three of them still claimed that youth incarceration was necessary in particular cases.

I do not think that incarceration of young offenders is the best solution in solving youth offending, as they might be negatively affected by the prison environment. However, there seems to be no better way to deal with youth offending at the moment, so jailing young offenders is necessary to control youth crimes.

(PO 05)
Similarly, officer No. 01 also objected to jailing juvenile offenders, preferring community-based approaches, though he agreed that it was sometimes necessary to apply this punishment.

*I do not support jailing juvenile offenders and I think that it is not effective in youth offending prevention. It is better to use community-based measures to deal with young offenders, which will not separate juveniles from the community. However, in particular cases, especially serious crimes, youth incarceration is necessary.*

(PO 05)

However, officer No. 02 stressed that jailing juveniles was ineffective in both preventing youth offending and the rehabilitation of young offenders. She showed a rather enlightened view: that placing children in an environment of criminals (prisons and reform schools) was putting them in a ‘school for crime’.

*It is unacceptable to put juveniles in prisons or reform schools. How can they reform themselves when they are surrounded by other criminals? They only learn the ‘bad’ things from other inmates. Prison is not the environment for educating or rehabilitating young offenders. Educating young offenders in the family, school or community would be much better than sending them to the jail.*

(PO 02)

While several participants acknowledged the achievements in correction and rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents, most admitted limitations which reduced the effectiveness of both rehabilitation of young offenders and prevention of youth offending. This was due to a lack of adequate rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms for the young offenders (HN Nguyen 2015, p. 31).

Officer No. 02 argued that it was not easy for young offenders to reintegrate into the community after their prison terms, as many considered that they had little chance to live a rehabilitated life. She again stressed that this was a direct consequence of jailing juveniles.
Many young offenders usually feel an inferiority complex after release and they are not confident in reintegrating to the community. The status of prisoners will significantly affect their lives. The impacts of this status usually last long and some young offenders will not be able to overcome it.

(PO 02)

She also suggested that young offenders released from prison would face significant issues of discrimination and isolation. This was similar to ideas raised by other officers who claimed that juvenile offenders released from prisons faced significant issues, including the daunting prospect of returning to school, finding an appropriate career and suffering discrimination from other people in the community and even their relatives.

People normally look down on former offenders and they avoid being in contact with those offenders. This circumstance is even more severe with young offenders, as they will feel isolated from the mainstream of the society. So they are more likely to be involved with delinquent peers and criminal activities again.

(PO 01)

Officer No. 01 also explained that young offenders were not likely to continue studying, but that would rather work. The view was also expressed that post-release offenders had problems with the integration process.

Lack of education and discrimination from others led to their difficulties in finding jobs and living a rehabilitated life. Many offenders were then involved with criminal activities again.

(PO 01)

Officer No. 07 went further when he linked isolation from others to recidivism among young offenders.
Many young offenders were prosecuted and incarcerated again soon after release. They usually explained that they could not become ‘good’ people and one of the most important reasons was the discrimination and isolation from others. They were mostly unemployed before committing offences again.

(PO 07)

Similarly, officer No. 02 argued that it was difficult for the former young offenders to reintegrate into the society after release and find stable jobs. It was not only because of their status as former offenders but also because of the lack of support for these offenders in their rehabilitation. She argued that there were still problems in educating, career training and preparing young offenders to reintegrate into the society during the time they were in prison. This significantly affected the process of their rehabilitation.

In terms of education and re-education of young offenders during their prison terms, most officers agreed that there had been many activities from the MPS and MOLISA to support young offenders, including primary education and programs eliminating illiteracy, formal legal education, civics and vocational training. They all admitted that juvenile offenders had chances to take part in these types of education and training during their prison terms. Officer No. 07 explained that several young offenders were illiterate on being sent to prisons while others had not finished primary school. The provision of primary school education was deemed important to support them in their rehabilitation process.

There are regulations and policy of providing primary school training for young offenders in prisons. We have cooperated with primary schools in the areas of prison locations and organised many classes to provide primary education to young offenders. Hundreds of juvenile offenders were given certificates of basic literacy standards during their prison terms as well.

(PO 07)

However, he also admitted that in particular cases, selected officers had to work as primary teachers to teach the young offenders, which might have limited the quality of teaching.
In the cases when the prison was in a remote area and we could not invite teachers to teach the young offenders, the prison staff would work as the teachers. Though we always tried to ensure the quality of education, there would be limitations.

(PO 07)

Officers No. 05, No. 06, No. 07 and No. 08 also mentioned legal training as an important part of correction and rehabilitation of young offenders in prison.

Legal education is one of the most important activities for incarcerated offenders to ensure the quality of the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of young offenders. This will help them avoid being involved in criminal activities again. We regularly organised legal training in all prisons.

(PO 07)

Vocational training, which was deemed appropriate and necessary for the rehabilitation of young offenders, was also mentioned. This philosophy was approved by most officers who stated that young inmates were trained to work during their prison terms. Officer No. 08 noted that there were various kinds of job training available based on the location of the prisons and the characteristics of young offenders.

Each prison decided selected suitable jobs for training and they arranged vocational training for the offenders. About ninety per cent of prisons had established vocational training centres inside the prisons.

(PO 08)

Moreover, officer No. 08 also noted that there had been an increase in the provision of job training for prisoners when they were divided into groups for better training of common civil jobs.

We divided prisoners into groups and provided them with suitable job training. Young offenders from urban areas were trained in craft jobs while those from rural areas were provided with agricultural jobs training. This will help them to find appropriate jobs when released.

(PO 08)
However, most officers argued that there were significant limitations in providing suitably matched vocational training for prisoners, which resulted in low rates of post-sentence employment among offenders.

_Due to the characteristics of the jail environment, we could only arrange limited kinds of vocational training, which might not be common in the community. Therefore, many prisoners were trained to work in prison but then could not do these jobs after their prison terms were over._

(PO 06)

Officer No. 07 also added details about the limitation of vocational training in prison and the lack of opportunities for prisoners to find suitable jobs after serving their prison terms.

_We conducted an investigation in 2013 regarding formal prisoners coming back to the community and found a surprisingly low rate of only 1.68 per cent of released inmates, including juvenile offenders, to do the jobs that they had been trained for in prison. This suggested significant issues in vocational training in the jail system._

(PO 07)

Similarly, officer No. 01 stated that vocational training in prison was not adequate despite the cooperation between the MPS and MOLISA.

_The MOLISA also cooperated with the TC8 to provide job training in the prison and reform school, but the outcomes were still limited._

(PO 01)

In terms of supporting young offenders to reintegrate into the society after their prison terms, all participants stated that education and counselling before release were also provided to make sure that the inmates would be well prepared for integrating back into the community.
We regularly organised training courses for the inmates who were about to finish their prison terms, to provide them with necessary knowledge, skills and preparation for reintegrating into the community. The young offenders are also provided with moral and social skills, as well as entertainment activities.

(PO 07)

Officer No. 08 noted that when coming back into the community, these prisoners were also supported with job training and funding for establishing a stable life. Officer No. 01 likewise argued that other people were also willing to help young offenders in their reintegration.

Though the discrimination still exists, most community members have a more positive view on the released juvenile offenders and they were more open and willing to help and support them in their integration, job training and creating a stable life.

(PO 01)

However, most officers admitted that Vietnamese approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders was not very effective and there were still many limitations that needed to be resolved.

We can see that the rate of recidivism among young offenders is still very high, which suggests that strategies of rehabilitation of young offenders and prevention of youth offending are not effective. The support for young offenders returning to the community is still very limited and ineffective.

(PO 02)

In general, while acknowledging the achievements in correction and rehabilitation of young offenders, most officers pointed out that there were limitations in these activities, which reduced their effectiveness. They also raised the idea of increasing the cooperation between the authorities, families and the community in the prevention of youth offending, as well as correction and rehabilitation of young offenders.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter had presented the opinions of the public officers in terms of their perceptions of the risk factors for general youth offending tendencies in Vietnam and the effectiveness of
prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of the young offenders. In general, data collected from the public officers regarding risk factors for youth offending was consistent with that from the life histories of the young offenders. Though these participants only mentioned several risk factors in each domain of individual, family, school, peer and community, most of these factors were also identified in the life history interviews with the young offenders.

Regarding the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders, most officers acknowledged the achievements of the activities, which had significantly contributed to the intervention of youth offending. However, several of them noted that there were weaknesses and limitations in the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of the young offenders.

The problems related to policing and regulatory mechanisms, including regulations on alcohol consumption among youth, have been discussed; the availability of drugs and the control of drugs and weapons; and the handling of crimes and other illegal activities. Though these issues were not identified as risk factors for youth offending in previous studies, they seemed to have had significant impacts on other risk factors in contributing to youth involvement in offending in this research. Therefore, it seems that these factors also need to be targeted in improving the effectiveness of youth offending prevention in Vietnam.
Chapter Nine
Discussion and Implications for Prevention

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, an overview of the risk factors for youth crime were presented, based on the qualitative data collected from the life histories of young male offenders, as well as the opinions of public officers in Vietnam. Particular risk factors in different domains were found in both the life history interviews with young offenders and interviews with the public officers. The life history interviews with young offenders also revealed several issues pertinent to existing policy and policing practices. The information was collected from the offenders’ life stories and synthesised to draw the relationships between their offending and the issues of policing policy. As well, the interviews with relevant public officers also shed light on their perception regarding their views of risk factors, youth offending prevention, correction and the rehabilitation of young offenders. There were both similarities and sharp differences in perspectives between the information collected from the interviews with young offenders and those from the public officers, which were significant for an in-depth understanding of the relevant risk factors and prevention of youth offending, as well as the correction and rehabilitation of young offenders.

This chapter will elaborate upon the findings in this study about the risk factors for youth offending. Individual, family, school, peer and other social risk factors will be reviewed and discussed, focusing on their impact on young Vietnamese males and their influence in the committing of offences. The relationship between the factors in different domains contributing to the potential for youth offending will also be discussed. The ecological technique (Reilly 2012), which is consistent with the risk factor paradigm (Farrington 2000) was employed to discuss the relative importance of these risk factors and the relationship between them in contributing to youth offending. The implications for improving the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders in Vietnam are also raised in this chapter.

9.2 The impacts of risk factors on youth offending

Throughout the chapters documenting the findings, various risk factors were identified in different domains. It was argued that the combination of these factors compounded the risk of
youth offending convictions, though each of them had individual effects. However, it was important to note that the influences of different risk factors on the likelihood of youth offending might significantly vary from each other within the sample. While the risk factors paradigm had clearly identified five domains of the risk factors for youth offending in this study, the relationship between them regarding youth behaviour and offending needs further contextualizing.

To better investigate the relationship between identified risk factors, an ecological approach has been utilised in this study to further sharpen the analysis of the relationship between the risk factors identified in this study. According to the ecological approach, the risk factors for youth offending could be categorised into three levels: macro, meso and micro (Reilly 2012). It is important to note again that the ecological approach is consistent with the risk factor paradigm in evaluating the impacts of the risk factors on the likelihood of youth offending (Reilly 2012).

From the findings in this study and the levels of the risk factors for youth offending in the ecological perspective as described in Figure 2.2, it can be seen that the risk factors identified in this research could also be categorised into the three levels. The negative influences of such societal phenomena as poverty, lack of policing and regulatory mechanisms, adverse impacts of technology and school management issues were important among macro risk factors. These, in turn, had significant influence on other factors in the lower levels, as well as on the likelihood of youth offending. The meso level comprised the family risk factors (e.g. poor parent-child relationships, neglect, domestic violence, inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision); the school risk factors (e.g. low bonding to school, truancy, grade retention, school expulsion and dropouts); and the influences of peers, adverse impacts from violent games and the Internet and other social issues (e.g. violence, gangs and the availability of drugs and weapons). The individual risk factors, such as lack of self-control and impulsiveness, risk-taking, violent and aggressive behaviour, physical abuse, substance abuse, trauma exposure and mental health issues were identified as the risk factors at the micro level. This is presented in Figure 9.1.
Figure 9.1: The levels of risk factors for youth offending identified in this study
The findings from this study revealed that the direct risk factors for youth offending in the sample lay at the micro level, including individual risk factors such as risk-taking, aggressive and violent behaviour, lack of empathy and substance abuse. It should be noted that many people who exhibited these characteristics do not necessarily commit criminal offences. Such factors, rather, need to be investigated and explained in the context of and relationship with the associated risk factors in the higher levels, namely the meso and macro levels. This study also revealed significant relationships between individual risk factors and the risk factors at meso level, such as the family structure and circumstances (conflict, domestic violence, divorce, neglect, parent-child relationship, discipline and supervision), school circumstances (low bonding to school, truancy, bullying and victimization and school violence) and peer influences (delinquent peers and gangs involvement). As identified in this study, family conflict and interparental violence, lack of parent-child relationship and parental involvement and inconsistent discipline were among the most outstanding family risk factors. School violence and other school issues, as well as involvement with delinquent peers and gang affiliation were also significant. Given that there are differences in the Vietnamese context related to these factors, the association of risk factors in contributing to youth offending in Vietnam is significant.

What was striking in the sample was the sheer extent of violence exemplified in parts of the Vietnamese school system and interparental violence in Vietnamese families. Many participants argued that they were strongly affected by school violence and some of them even claimed violent bullying in school as the most significant reason for their violent behaviour. There were notable crossovers in violence between school and family environments, with many in the interview sample experiencing violence both at home and at school. This suggested the relentless nature of violent influences. Several participants (e.g. Duy – Case 7, Han – Case 10, Phuong – Case 18, Sang – Case 19, Tri – Case 23 and Tung – Case 27) pointed out that physical abuse in the family negatively affected their attitudes and behaviours; some even became resistant to corporal punishment, with their parents incapable of controlling them with cruel irony, such disciplinary regimes had the effect of repelling the young offenders, encouraging them to leave home. In other cases (e.g. Son – Case 20), the participants even committed serious offences just to avoid being punished by their parents because of a minor mistake.

Moreover, the impact of one risk factor might have knock-on effects, increasing or creating
other risk factors, which could in turn influence the participants’ involvement in offending (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Interactions between meso risk factors occurred when issues in the family context might relate to school problems and involvement with delinquent peers, games and the internet. It could be argued that those who lived in ‘problem’ families – those in a broken home, suffering family conflict or inter-parental violence, or having child-rearing issues – would seek other environments of social compatibility and interest. The effect of such influences, suggested by the findings, was the creation of proxy or substitute families taking the place of the problem families. Criminal activity, concentrated in gangs or delinquent peer groups, became an escape. For instance, Long (Case 14) was involved with drug use and selling when he ran away from home because of conflict with his stepmother. Similarly, Phuong (Case 18) left home after his father’s persistent involvement in gambling. It was a hostile environment filled with conflict. He subsequently engaged in gangs and criminal activities before being arrested.

Conversely, the sample findings showed that an almost frenetic engagement with the internet, violent games, gangs and delinquent peers also significantly reduced the individuals’ ties to family and school, which in turn dramatically increased their likelihood of being involved in antisocial behaviour and criminal activities. Many even ran away from home several times. They searched for substitute socializing environments in the internet, games, peers and especially gangs. At least seven participants (23.3%) admitted that the home environment was so boring that they left home, after which they became gang members or associated with delinquent peers.

When looking at a broader picture of the society and community, there was a correlation between risk factors at different levels. The adverse effects of the risk factors for youth offending at micro and meso levels could be linked to such macro risk factors, namely poverty, the disruptive influences of technology on a rapidly transforming society and lack of policing and regulatory mechanisms. These macro risk factors might be the root of other risk factors at the lower levels, suggestive of a circularity of effects. While many problems in the family and school could be linked to community management, as with other studies on risk factors, poverty in the Vietnamese context also featured in the findings as important. Lack of community policing was also significant in many cases. For instance, it had been shown that inter-parental violence was a significant issue in several cases (e.g. Case 15 – Nguyen). The seeming lack of recorded intervention mechanisms at the police/community level regarding
interparental violence constituted an important risk at the meso level. It suggested a form of societal breakdown. Furthermore, the meso risk factors also showed significant impacts on individual behaviour (micro level). For instance, several participants claimed that they were involved in criminal activities and with delinquent peers because of lack of parental involvement and supervision. According to the findings, this lack of supervision might have occurred because of various factors (e.g. poverty, family conflict, and inconsistent child-rearing methods).

The findings of the risk factors in this research showed that young people had committed offences and a large proportion of the interview sample had had various troubles during their youth, influenced by personal, social and community environmental factors. While this research could not conclude that specific elements of these life histories were the leading causes of youth offending (indeed, identifying causal factors was not the point of this study), it clearly identified the correlation and associated risk factors within a paradigm of analysis of the offenders’ life events and experiences.

In general, the findings of the risk factors for youth offending in this study were consistent with previous studies, such as Hawkins et al. (2000), Heilbrun, Goldstein and Redding (2005), DM Nguyen (2014), Vien (2010), Farrington and Welsh (2008) and HN Nguyen (2015). However, the particular risk factors at each level (especially the macro level) and their impacts with the use of the life history approach, paired with the ecological model used, results might have varied from these other studies. The study used a novel approach specific to the Vietnamese case by examining the relationship and interaction between risk factors at different levels in contributing to youth offending. An acute influence at the macro level seemed to be poverty and lack of policing, as they had a strong impact on other risk factors at the lower levels (meso and micro levels), while school violence, family structure and practice and peer influences were among the strongest predictors of youth offending at the meso level. At the micro level, lack of self-control, physical abuse, violent behaviour and involvement in other illegal or criminal activities were identified singly, and in combination, as having critical impacts on young people and their offending. What this thesis has sought to do is to consider the interaction and mingling of the factors in the ecological model, suggesting that a better understanding of the micro factors is only possible when considered in a broader context with the appearance of and the interaction with, the risk factors at the meso and macro levels.
9.3 Limitation in understanding of risk factors for youth offending

Before the present study several attempts were made to examine youth offending considering risk factors in Vietnam (e.g. NT Dang 2007; CB Do 2000; DT Ho 2002; DM Nguyen 2014; TPT Nguyen & TH Cao 2012; CD Pham 2005), though there was a lack of studies in the area of risk factors for youth offending (HN Nguyen 2015). This present study revealed a narrow reading and perspective about risk factors in the samples when most young offenders and the public officers could only see certain selected risk factors as the reasons for youth offending, but were unable to see them in the context of other broader-based risk factors. There was a tendency to focus on the direct risk factors in the micro and meso levels, but rarely mention possible risk factors at the macro level.

In the life history interviews, the interviewed sample mentioned the following factors as the direct reason for their offence: not being able to control themselves (e.g. Khang – Case 13, Hai – Case 12 and Nguyen – Case 15); being encouraged by friends (e.g. Gioi – Case 9, Tam – Case 21); needing money for games (e.g. Duy – Case 7 and Son – Case 20); drug addiction (e.g. Duc – Case 5 and Hoang – Case 11); or the influence of pornography (e.g. Anh – Case 1 and Trung – Case 26). It was clear in the interviews that a lack of self-awareness about the context of their offending was evident. Risks posed by the environment were not evidently clear to them, a fact not unsurprising. In general, most participants only acknowledged the risk factors at the micro level, particularly related to the individual, such as a predisposition to risk-taking, impulsiveness, low self-control and drug addiction. This was not surprising, given their reflections on individual circumstances. The meso risk factors did impress several participants, who were deeply affected by the presence of violence in the family, school violence, the influence of gangs, peer influence and negative impacts from games and the internet. However, rarely did they have the perspicacity to acknowledge risk factors at the macro level.

In some cases, though the offenders referred to selected risk factors, they did not see any discernible link between these factors and their offending. They just told their stories of the specific events that they could remember, but did not think that these had significance in influencing their behaviour and offending. This was shown by responses to questions on poverty, with the participants unclear or unable to reflect on the links to the economic conditions and offending. The point was replicated in the public officer interviews,
demonstrating a general lack of awareness of the role that poverty plays in the context of youth offending in Vietnam.

What the life history approach did do in this case was provide data and a rich extraction of material on lives affected by policing approaches, a lack of parent-child relationship, violence in the family and at schools, points many participants indirectly acknowledged in their life stories. Most participants were willing to tell their stories using rich information related to the events that they considered important to their lives. This provided nuance and complexity to the dimension of offending absent from court and police records and other research methods. When the case studies were subsequently written, many risks factors that were either not acknowledged or given insufficient weight by the participants, were identified as having had significant impacts. The analysis of these case studies shed light on the matrix of probable risk factors for youth offending specific to the Vietnam context.

The findings from the life histories assumed greater importance when it was realised that the interviews with public officers only provided a limited understanding of the risk factors. In general, the public officers who were interviewed had generalised experience in working with young offenders in prevention of youth offending and the correction and rehabilitation of young offenders, but the information they provided was little better than that sourced from the young offenders. In responding, these officers also mentioned factors in the domains of the individual, family, school, peer and the community. They mostly blamed individual characteristics such as lack of self-control, impulsiveness, risk-taking and substance abuse as important factors leading to youth offending. Adverse influences from peers, school violence, involvement in games and the internet, and school violence were also mentioned. However, most officers stressed the importance of family in preventing youth offending. They pointed out that negative family risk factors could result in other issues in individual behaviours, school attitudes or youth involvement with delinquent peers and antisocial behaviour. Therefore, several officers argued that parents, family circumstances and other family factors were more important than other risk factors in contributing to youth offending. In this view, the public officers’ opinions were much better than that of the young offenders, as they could see the relationship and the impacts of family risk factors (meso level) on individual factors (micro level) and youth offending. However, these factors were only at the micro and meso levels while few officers linked them to a higher level (macro level). Thus, similar to the interviews with young offenders, the interviews with public officers also showed a limited
understanding. Not many macro risk factors were mentioned by these officers. For instance, in several cases when the officers blamed game involvement and lack of parental involvement and supervision as important risk factors for youth offending, they could not link them to the broader context of poverty and policing factors. The economic conditions might have led to numerous family risk factors, including lack of parental involvement and supervision, while the management of games, the internet and social media could result in the negative impacts on the young people. However, these factors were not mentioned by the officers in their interviews as significant indicators for youth offending.

However, it was interesting that one officer (officer No. 01) pointed out that the changes in Vietnamese society were a significant risk factor which influenced other factors and increased the likelihood of youth offending. He actually saw the factors at a macro level (e.g. rapid social change and the impact of the industrialisation process) which led to many other issues at the lower levels and these issues had direct impacts on young people and their offending. He was, rather noticeably, the only one who mentioned such macro factors. Some officers understandably took a less charitable view of management approaches to access and use of the Internet. In their mind, this led to the negative impact of violent games on young people. However, there were several other macro risk factors which were not discussed by officer No. 01 or any other participant, such as poverty, the negative influence of technology and lack of policing.

Therefore, though having a broader view than the young offenders, these officers generally saw the risk factors for youth offending separately but did not see the interrelationships with other risk factors at different levels. This suggested a lack of holistic understanding which would potentially affect the effectiveness of intervention and prevention of youth offending. The life history approach, sharpened with the ecology model, has suggested a potential corrective to this.

When asked about the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders in Vietnam, most officers acknowledged that these programs were ineffective. The picture here was one of vagueness: a lack of clarity on how effectiveness was measured, and a generally flawed understanding on where the factors risk factors played a role. This study does not claim that the sole factor behind the supposedly poor strategies in coping with youth crime lay in an ignorance of risk factors. The entire criminal and justice
system in Vietnam is complex, but has not previously been subjected to a methodological overview on the background of youth crime in its individual and socio-economic context.

9.4 Implications for intervention with youth offending in Vietnam

What, then, are the implications for intervention programs for youth offending in Vietnam? The topic is enormous, and the following points of discussion are mere suggestions. Though several intervention programs (e.g. the National Program of Combating Crimes) had been designed and implemented in Vietnam, which had shown particular positive outcomes (e.g. there was a reduction in the rate of youth offending) (Ministry of Public Security 2014), the effectiveness of youth offending prevention was still limited.

9.4.1 Improving the efficiency of youth offending prevention

According to Tonry and Farrington (1995), there are four major common crime prevention strategies including criminal justice (law enforcement) prevention, developmental prevention, community prevention and situational prevention. Vietnam’s record in all these fields is sketchy – much of this shown in this study.

Law enforcement prevention refers to traditional deterrent and rehabilitative strategies operated by law enforcement and criminal justice system agencies (Farrington 2007). It is clear that enforcement and implementation of criminal laws have direct and indirect influences on behaviour, deterring some potential offenders because of the fear that sanctions will be incurred, or prevent some crimes by detaining offenders or controlling their activities. However, it has been shown that the potential effects of law enforcement on crime prevention are limited and the public safety policies solely or primarily based on law enforcement are insufficient to protect the public (Tonry & Farrington 1995). This is especially the case in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the most common crime prevention strategy is law enforcement prevention, while community prevention has been mentioned as well. However, these approaches have revealed several shortcomings, resulting in ineffective crime prevention. The primary forms of crime prevention in the context of law enforcement tend to only include criminal law charges, techniques of enforcement and policy related to sentencing, or other situational measures to make particular offences harder to accomplish (Tonry & Farrington 1995). Tonry and Farrington (1995) also argued that there was an insufficiency of law enforcement
prevention measures due to the diversity of crimes and criminals. The authors suggest that a comprehensive governmental crime prevention strategy should not be limited to only law enforcement prevention, but should include developmental, community and situational approaches in addition to law enforcement (Tonry & Farrington 1995). In this study, all the participants admitted that they hardly received any treatment before being sent to the prison after committing their crimes, so the punitive approach seemed to be the dominant prevention strategy in Vietnam.

Most significant here is the absence of a separate youth offending prevention system in Vietnam, which focuses on preventing the young offenders from being in conflict with the laws in the first place. It followed that prevention strategies were applied indistinguishably across juvenile and adult offenders. However, the 2002 United Nations Guidelines focused not only on the sentencing phase, but, more importantly, assisting with the social reintegration of offenders, with specific reference to ‘all those programs which work with children, young people or adults already involved in the criminal justice system, including those in custody and returning to the community’ (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010). These programs are appropriate not only for adult offenders but also for young offenders.

Therefore, strategies in development prevention (which focuses on countering the risk factors for youth offending, as well as promoting the protective factors) and situational prevention (which stresses the riskiness and difficulty of committing crimes) should be considered for implementation in Vietnam. While developmental prevention attempts to avoid the development of individual criminal potential, situational prevention typically focuses on altering the context to limit the opportunities for committing crimes (Tonry & Farrington 1995).

Developmental prevention programs ‘promote the well-being of people and encourage pro-social behaviour, through social, economic, health and educational measures, with a particular emphasis on children and youth and a focus on the risk and protective factors associated with crime and victimization’ (2002 United Nations Guidelines, Article 6.a cited in United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010). Developmental prevention was also known as the risk-focused prevention strategy. The idea of risk-focused prevention is to ‘identify the key risk factors for offending and implement prevention methods designed to counteract them’ (Farrington 2007). From the explanation of the risk factors for youth
offending, prevention strategies should be designed and the scholars, policy makers and the practitioners linked together in preventing youth offending (Farrington 2000).

It has been evidenced that the most significant and efficient risk-focused prevention programs are those which focus on individual and family risk factors and provide skills training, general parent education, parent training, pre-school intellectual enrichment and some multi-component programs, or the combination of these (Farrington 2007). In this study, family environment and school environment appeared to be significant to youth involvement in offending. Therefore, family prevention (e.g. parent education and parent management training) and school-focused prevention strategies should be implemented to reduce the risk factors and promote the protective factors to counteract the risk factors for youth offending. Many other individual risk factors were identified as well. Though these individual risk factors may be modified and reduced due to family-focused and school-focused prevention programs it is important to promote individual-focused programs. Individual-focused prevention addresses and targets risk factors for delinquency and later offending in the individual domain, including low levels of intelligence and grades attained at school, temperament, low empathy, impulsiveness and hyperactivity (Farrington & Welsh 2008; Ross et al. 2011). Therefore, individual-focused programs such as child social skills training and preschool intellectual enrichment can be effective in reducing the risk factors for youth offending.

As well, situational prevention refers to interventions created to reduce the probability, as well as to increase the riskiness, and hinderances of offending, to prevent the occurrence of crimes (Clarke 1995). The 2002 UN Guidelines (Article 6.c, cited in United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010) stress that such approaches may help ‘prevent the occurrence of crimes by reducing opportunities, increasing risks of being apprehended and minimizing benefits, including through environmental design and by providing assistance and information to potential and actual victims.’ The main aims of situational crime prevention are managing, designing, or manipulating the immediate environment to make crime less attractive and more difficult to commit. Therefore, the Vietnamese context should be considered specially when applying a situational prevention strategy in Vietnam.

Situational crime prevention is closely related to environmental crime prevention and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) (Cozens, Saville & Hillier 2005), a program specifically concerned with changing the built environment or landscape (United
Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010 p. 14). There are still concerns about situation crime prevention as a policy because it focuses on the prevention of specific offences rather than on crime prevention in general (Bullock, Clarke & Tilley 2010). A particular situation prevention program, therefore, may work with one or some particular types of offences, while being impossible or ineffective in broader application to other offences. Moreover, although some situational methods are effective in some circumstances of crime prevention, there are continuing debates about whether situational approaches can help with preventing crimes or just displace them to other times, places and targets (Clarke 1995; Tonry & Farrington 1995). There is increasingly widespread recognition that situational approaches may complement law enforcement approaches to crime prevention (Clarke 2009). Therefore, situational prevention would also be an important strategy for youth crime prevention in Vietnam.

9.4.2 Improving the quality of youth offending research to support the prevention of youth crime

TTN Pham (2013) noted that the prevention of youth offending in Vietnam has not received sufficient attention, with only a few legal regulations focused on youth offending prevention. The bulk of existing regulations concentrates on the the final stage of criminal justice process when the young people were already at high risk of offending, or at the point when they are already punished and incarcerated. Paréus (2014) argues that there is a strong focus on the prevention of potential criminal activities, but generally a lack of research focused on the risk factors that could lead to youth offending. Therefore, prevention mainly focused on enhancing and strengthening police control with an emphasis on the close monitoring of youth (DM Nguyen 2014; TTN Pham 2013). This confirms that the intervention programs actively focus on law enforcement, while there was a lack of evidence-based prevention programs in Vietnam.

This was consistent with the argument of HN Nguyen (2015) that there was a notable lack of studies about the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. Despite there being several studies investigating youth offending issues, HN Nguyen argues that the extant literature focusing on explaining youth offending based on established criminological theories was rare and only a few studies attempted to explore and explain the risk factors for youth offending (HN Nguyen 2015, p. 58). The literature review in this study also found that there were few studies focusing on investigating and explaining the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. More importantly, there was little evidence that the findings from these studies had
been implemented in the intervention programs for youth offending prevention. The studies of the effectiveness of the intervention with youth offending were also limited in that most of the studies on youth offending aimed ‘to explore the nature and scale of juvenile crime problems, rather than responding to it’ (HN Nguyen 2015, p. 60).

It is important to note that the lack of studies on youth offending, the risk factors behind its occurrence and the official response in Vietnam had significant impacts on the prevention or deterrence strategies. It is therefore suggested that a deeper and more sophisticated effort in studying the risk factors for youth offending, youth offending prevention and the correction and rehabilitation of the young offender, would be beneficial in responding to these issues in Vietnam.

**9.4.3 Effectively enforcing of the legal regulations related to policing youth**

It was found in this study that several issues related to the enforcement of legal regulations and policing youth might have provided a backdrop to make youth offending more likely. Therefore, it is important to increase legal regulations enforcement in order to improve the effectiveness of youth offending prevention in Vietnam.

Regarding the issue of the negative influences of technology, thought should be given towards regulations curbing the violent internet gaming culture, though this area is admittedly controversial given questions about causation, influence and easy access to the Internet (DM Nguyen 2014). The online game phenomenon has sparked a debate about the influence of violence in the broader community and specifically with youth. The apparent lack of regulations in this field, and the unfettered access of youths to content, irrespective of subject matter, was a common theme to emerge in this study. The question to therefore ask is how far regulation of this phenomenon is to be managed Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 7, most of the online games in Vietnam were related to violence, while other games involved gambling. Therefore, these games could significantly affect young people if they are not well controlled by the authorities.

Moreover, other adverse effects of the internet, such as pornography, violent materials from the internet and violent online games were found to have potentially negative influences on young people as well. Moreover, several participants admitted that they committed crimes to feed their addiction to the internet (Case 7, Case 20, Case 21, Case 22, Case 27 and Case 28). Others also stressed the negative influence of playing violent games for an extended period
(Van – Case 28). More importantly, all these participants stated that it was easy for them to access the materials which were not suitable for their age on the internet and there was hardly any intervention from the authority or the owners of the internet agencies. A broader policy question may have to centre around a sounder internet management policy.

The responses from participants suggest the need of curriculum review in school. A more diverse program is needed, as most participants admitted that many of the things they had to study at school were not useful to them. Subjects like ‘Giao duc cong dan’ (Citizen Education) and ‘Dao Duc’ (Conduct) in school left little impression on most participants. Moreover, it was argued that the school system in Vietnam focused too much on academic content rather than behaviour and skills training, which led to a disproportionate emphasis on the former against the latter (CP Ho 2013).

Broadly speaking, the general learning environment seemed compromised. School violence was shown as very significant in this study with most of the participants admitting to having experienced or witnessed school violence in their school with varying degrees of frequency. School violence in Vietnam has become an alarming issue, which poses a significant threat not only to the students and teachers at school but also pertains to broader matters of public order and safety. To that end, several recent studies addressed the issues of school violence in Vietnam (TNT Nguyen 2012; TPT Nguyen & HT Cao 2012; TTH Nguyen & NTMT Tran 2013; VL Nguyen 2009). These studies do not consider the issue more holistically, neglecting, for instance, other risk factors related to school management and handling. Poor school discipline and management have been evident alongside the prevalence of gangs among the student body and those from outside the school. Several offenders admitted that parents and other family members even came to school to attack other students (e.g. Duy – Case 7). This posed a great threat to the safety of the students and teachers in the school, given the minor role played by security staff at the school. Furthermore, other school issues like truancy, grade retention or the relationship between the school and families were also identified to affect the students. These points suggest the need for broader reform in the school education system to reduce the risks for youth offending.

Moreover, inadequate policing was also highlighted as a problem. The regulatory mechanisms and handling of unlawful and criminal activities regarding gang behaviour, violence, drugs, gambling and prostitution, were not sufficient. The offenders easily became involved with smoking and drinking when following their peers or family members. Though
this might not have a direct impact on young offenders, the lack of enforcement of regulations may increase the likelihood of youth involvement in offending.

A general attitude of indifference to regulations regarding purchase and consumption of tobacco and alcohol prevails. Other problems associated with illegality, such as gangs and violence in the community, the policing with drugs, firearms and other weapons were also recorded.

9.4.4 Juvenile courts and restorative justice

‘Restorative justice is a social justice movement that aims to deal with consequences of crime through repairing and restoring relationships of three key stakeholders: victims, offenders and communities’ (Ward & Langlands 2009). This movement was an innovative approach, focusing less on punishing the offenders but focusing on the restoration of the damage of the crimes. Restorative justice programs are formulated based on the belief that a conflict should be solved with the active involvement of the parties in the conflict to mitigate the adverse consequences (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006). It is believed that criminal activities violate not only the legal regulations but also the victims of the crimes and the community, so both the offenders and the victim parties should be considered in addressing the consequences of criminal activities (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006).

Though restorative justice and diversion programs are significant in several Western countries, they are not officially considered in Vietnam. Concepts of restorative justice and diversion are still uncommon, given that no corresponding terms to the concepts are found in legal documents and judicial practice (HN Nguyen 2015; TTN Pham 2013). Though a study funded by UNICEF and carried out by the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice & UNICEF Vietnam 2010) to address the potential application of restorative justice, diversion of punishment and reintegration for young offenders following their release from prison, no policy or legal regulation related to this area has been introduced in Vietnam. As a result, there is a lack of alternatives for diverting young people from being involved in the criminal justice system (HN Nguyen 2015).

Vietnam still does not have separate specialised laws, procedures and authorities regarding the handling of juvenile offenders. Nor are there appropriately specific measures in supporting child victims and witnesses (TTN Pham 2013). Similarly, HN Nguyen (2015) argued that there were shortcomings in the juvenile justice system in Vietnam, including
the lack of reliable and systematic information about the children in conflict with the law; the absence of a separate system to handle juvenile offenders and juvenile courts; and the limitations of adequately responding to youth offending (HN Nguyen 2015). Furthermore, the youth justice system had also been criticised for not being able to provide consistent rehabilitation and reintegration services for supporting the young offenders after they were released from the custodial institutions (Cox 2010).

These shortcomings of the current justice system in Vietnam in dealing with youth offending have been acknowledged by the government, judicial officers and several researchers. All agree that specialised courts should be formed to deal with juveniles (TTN Pham 2013). Therefore, the establishment of restorative justice and juvenile courts in Vietnam should be significant in dealing with the young people in conflict with the law and support them with their rehabilitation and reintegration in the society after their prison terms.

9.5 Conclusion

From this discussion, it is very apparent that a lack of proper understanding of risk factors for youth offending has been found not only among the young offenders but also the public officers. This lack of awareness might significantly influence the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders. From these findings, implications for enhancing youth offending intervention programs were also raised.
Chapter Ten
Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This study began as a novel, singular way to apply life history approaches to the study of risk factors in Vietnam. What emerged from this study was a society in transition, conflicted and inadequate in its approaches in dealing with young offenders. These issues were related to not only the individual factors, but also family, school, peer and other social and community risk factors. This study significantly contributed to the understanding of youth offending in Vietnam and, especially, the risk factors for youth offending which, conceptually, is still rare in Vietnamese penological literature. More importantly, the research investigated the risk factors for youth offending from the life histories of young offenders, which has never been conducted in Vietnam before. The life history approach in this study, therefore, could significantly contribute to the methodology of conducting research in the area of criminology in Vietnam in the future. Regarding practical aspect, the findings of this study provides not only a better understanding of the risk factors for youth offending but also a more effective response to youth offending in Vietnam.

In this chapter, the first section summarises the findings of this study in the relationship to the research questions. The contributions of the current study are discussed in the next section, while the last two sections acknowledge the limitations of this study and suggest future research in this area.

10.2 Summary of findings

10.2.1 Responding to the research questions

The findings in this study have consistently responded to the research questions raised prior to conducting the research. This will be discussed subsequently in this chapter. The main research question in this study was: ‘What are the risk factors for youth offending and how do they influence young people in causing them to commit offences?’ From the findings, numerous risk factors for youth offending were identified. These factors were categorised in five domains, namely individual risk factors, family risk factors, school-related risk factors, peer-related risk factors and community and other social risk factors. The findings of the risk
factors were identified from the analysis of not only the life histories of the young offenders, but also the perspectives of the public officers who dealt with the prevention of youth offending and the rehabilitation of young offenders.

Moreover, the impacts of these factors on the likelihood of offending among young people were discussed in this study. The ecological approach was also utilised to evaluate the relationship between and correlation of these risk factors in contributing to youth offending. These risk factors were also grouped in three levels namely micro, meso and macro levels. These factors correlated with others from different levels of risk factors in providing the contextual background for potential youth crime. Furthermore, the interview with the public officers also revealed their opinions about the prevention of youth offending and the rehabilitation of young offenders. The findings of this study are presented in the following sections.

10.2.2 A lack of risk factors studies and life history research

From the literature review, it could be seen that while research of risk factors for youth offending was established in several Western countries, there was a lack of scholarship on risk factors in Asian countries, including Vietnam (Chen & Astor 2010; Le, Monfared & Stockdale 2005). In Vietnam, though there were several studies attempting to investigate the causes of youth offending, and mentioning several risk factors for youth offending, not many in-depth studies of risk factors for youth offending have been recorded. These studies tended to explain the causal factors that led to youth offending, but not the factors that increased the likelihood of youth involvement in offending. What this study set out to do was provide a broader, more nuanced appraisal of contextual factors of youth offending, rather than the causal dimension.

The most recent and systematic research on the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam was conducted by HN Nguyen (2015), one of the few studies of its type. In this study, HN Nguyen (2015) also pointed out gaps in the literature related to risks factors for youth offending in Vietnam in comparison with other countries. When compared with previous studies regarding youth offending in Vietnam, HN Nguyen (2015) was much broader in covering a sample of over two thousand juvenile offenders in all the four reform schools in Vietnam. However, the study of HN Nguyen (2010) relied significantly on a survey with incarcerated young offenders from particular reform schools in Vietnam while this current
study focuses on particular inmates from selected prisons. Therefore, the findings of HN Nguyen (2015) might be broader, but not as deep as the findings from this current study. That study was also limited to looking at the most important risk factors and did not apply the ecological technique. This approach had a notable limitation in not engaging the life history methodology of the individual to reflect broadly on the risk factors for their offending (which was reinforced in this current study). Moreover, from the literature review, it was found that no study of risk factors for youth offending based on the life histories of young offenders had ever been conducted in Vietnam. This, again, stressed the unique contribution of this study to the knowledge and study of risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.

10.2.3 Findings of risk factors for youth offending

What the four previous chapters of this study revealed were the findings of risk factors for youth offending from the life histories of 30 young incarcerated offenders in the prisons in the North of Vietnam, as well as the interviews with eight selected public officers. They also showed the nature of mediating factors beyond the individual characteristics of the offenders, the interplay of issues that proved relentless in many instances: violence in the home environment and violence in school and the neighbourhood.

10.2.3.1 Individual risk factors

At the individual level, many risk factors were identified from the analysis of data collected from the life histories of the young offenders. What emerged from the individuals interviewed were specific characteristics identified in the literature as possible risk factors: aggressive and violent behaviour, risk-taking behaviour, lack of self-control, lack of empathy, involvement with other illegal activities and substance abuse.

This study found that participants with a high level of risk-taking, aggressive and violent behaviour had been involved in violent and serious crimes such as murder, robbery and intentionally inflicting injuries on others. Lack of self-control was also a significant risk factor which appeared in many case studies. Several participants explained that they committed the offences because of impulsiveness and an inability to control themselves, especially in the cases of murder, rape and intentionally inflicting injuries on others. While the individual characteristics were interesting in the understanding of youth offending, it also concealed the broader social macro and some meso factors in terms of risk factors.
The life histories showed a range of factors regarding instances of drug and alcohol consumption among those in the sample (e.g. Cases 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 28 and 30). While acknowledging that these might not, in their own way, have contributed to crime, an environment of addiction compounded the risk of criminal offense and violence, was a patent reality.

10.2.3.2 Family risk factors

Regarding family risk factors, the following were relevant in the sampled interviews: the relationship between parents and children in the family, child maltreatment, family conflict and inter-parental violence, separation from parents, family disruption and remarriage, inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision, criminal and substance-abused parents, running away from home and several others. The image generated from the life histories is one of considerable family dysfunction. The sample revealed a prevalence of several family risk factors that appeared in all thirty cases, such as poor family bonding, poor parent-child relationships and a lack of parental involvement in their upbringing, inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision. What matters is the background of risk with a preponderance of family risk factors. This suggested a significant relationship between family bonding, parent-child relationship, discipline, parental supervision and child maltreatment and youth involvement in offending. This finding is consistent with Farrington and Welsh (2008) when they categorised these factors within a larger category designated child-rearing methods, which significantly affected the likelihood of youth offending.

A notable, if grim picture to emerge from the sample was the sheer prevalence of inter-family physical abuse (e.g. Cu – Case 3, Han – Case 10, Nguyen – Case 15, Phuc – Case 16, Phuong – Case 18, Tri – Case 23 and Tung – Case 27). The relationship between physical abuse and youth offending had been well established in the literature (Bender 2010; Doolan et al. 2013; Fagan 2005; Farrington & Welsh 2008). In this current study physical abuse was a serious problem with half of the participants physically abused by their parents and other family members. While most of them admitted experiencing corporal punishment regularly, some of the offenders pointed out that they had suffered severe injuries after being beaten by their parents or other family members. This issue was closely relevant to inter-parental domestic violence, which was identified in the family domain. The violent environment did not stop in the home: it followed those interviewed into the school environment and community (see Diep – Case 4, Duy – Case 7, Phuc – Case 16, Phuong – Case 18, Tam – Case 21 and Van – Case 28). A relationship can be
assumed between various forms of violence including being physically abused, domestic violence, school violence and violence in the community and the likelihood of youth offending from the case studies in this research.

Other family risk factors including family conflict, inter-parental violence and a disrupted family, as well as running away from home, were also significant in several cases. Such factors provided correlates that did have significant impacts on increasing other risk factors, which in turn aggravated the likelihood of offending. It was evident in the interview sample that family violence affected constructive parental involvement and the quality of the environment. Grimly, this study also found that such environments of abuse dealt not merely with that between parents but also of parents against their children. In this general environment of dysfunction, ties were poor, and an incentive to leave home and find substitute ‘proxy’ families became a reality. This took the form of playing internet games, involvement with delinquent peers, gang membership and engaging in antisocial activities. Many participants then committed offences with their peers and groups.

10.2.3.3 School risk factors

The world revealed in the life history data on school risk factors is a dark one for young offenders, featuring in academic failure, poor school bonding, truancy, grade retention, dropping out of school and school expulsion and especially school violence, victimisation and bullying at school were among the identified risk factors. Many participants in the study ended up doing poorly at school, which led to the seemingly unsuccessful school policy of grade retention and, in many instances, the confirmation of that policy’s failure with dropping out of school. This was consistent with previous studies that found that grade retention was the strongest predictor of dropping out of school (GE Anderson, Whipple & Jimerson 2002; Meador 2016; Pagani et al. 2001; Xia & Kirby 2009). Over 70% of all the participants dropped out of school or were expelled from school, which suggested a strong relationship between dropout and youth offending.

One of the most significant school risk factors identified in this study was school violence. All thirty participants admitted that they experienced violence at different levels in their school. Such school environments show little by way of educational programs, but much in the terms of degrees of school violence, be it between students, in classrooms, in some cases towards teachers, or individual instances of bullying. It was common in many cases that the
students formed groups and fought others, in cases even using dangerous weapons (e.g. knives).

Added to this was a compounding and complicating factor: the reluctance on the part of school management to forge safe practices and policies on student welfare in the learning environments. The findings of the life histories suggest not merely the prevalence of violence in the schools but a distinct lack of interest, or willingness, to develop anti-violence platforms. This was further replicated by the teaching staff, who seemed fearful and reluctant to intervene. School, therefore, became a dangerous place for many students, providing environments rife with bullying and attacks both internally and externally directed. The lack of a safe environment inevitably led to students dropping out or truanting. Gang involvement was also common in many schools, a point made even more dramatic by the involvement of external non-school members who made incursions to attack students on school grounds. Worryingly, these issues happened regularly in some case studies, most strikingly demonstrated by Case 7 (Duy) who was severely attacked by other students’ parents. Even students who had dropped out of school returned to engage in acts of violence on the grounds. Tam (Case 21) provided such an instance.

Moreover, there was a significant weakness in the cooperation between school and families in managing and educating the students. Effectively, there was a breakdown in the learning cycle between home and school, neither resourcing the students’ needs. Several parents only knew about their children’s problems at school when they were arrested.

10.2.3.4 Peer risk factors

In terms of peer influence, pointed out by Hawkins et al. (2000) as a significant factor for youth offending, there was a predominant appearance of adverse impacts from delinquent peers, a factor identified in 28 cases (93.3%).

The socialising dimension here was important as the peer group became a substitute family in many instances, and in other cases, a socialising mechanism that might involve criminal activities. Nevertheless, most of them admitted adverse impacts from their peers on their behaviour. Sixteen participants (53.3%) committed their offences in cooperation with their peers, especially in the cases of theft, robbery and intentionally inflicting injuries on other persons.

Furthermore, gang affiliation, where peer factors were particularly powerful, was also a
striking risk factor. Twenty-three (76%) participants were involved with gangs in their school or/and the community. This factor was closely related to the involvement with delinquent peers; when joining gangs, young people were afforded more chances to be involved with other delinquents in the same groups. However, this factor was even more significant as the participants were involved with more than a single peer often finding themselves in groups of people in conflict with the law. Therefore, Bouchard and Spindler (2010) claim that the likelihood of offending among young people significantly increases during gang affiliation period. Gang members, having a sense of their own esprit d’corps, would hatch plans and commit their offences as part of a joint enterprise.

Such gang involvement was much more significant to the situation of being involved with peers (Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Most of the participants realized the adverse effect of joining gangs with some of them blaming their peer influence and gang affiliation as the most important factor for their involvement in offending such as Hoang (Case 11), Trong (Case 24) and Xuong (Case 30). However, most of them stated that they enjoyed being with peers and groups. Several participants denied to be affected by joining gangs (though they were actually affected) while others claimed that they felt a responsibility to join their peer groups in their socializing activities. Delinquent peers would provide the ample prelude to activities that, in some cases, became criminal (e.g. Xuong – Case 30). The peer group-gang nexus thereby had a normalising function, providing a significant background of risk for offending.

10.2.3.5 Community risk factors

Chapter Seven covered some of the biggest factors reflecting the transforming nature of Vietnam including poverty, adverse influences of violent games and the internet, the availability of drugs and firearms and dysfunction in the neighbourhood. It is significant to note that two of the most important risk factors in this study were found in this chapter, including poverty and the influence of internet and violent online games. The Vietnamese society is changing, even disruptively, in the face of technology and a large young population. This has also had disruptions to youth development. Poverty and negative impacts of technology (internet and violent online games) are of such disruptions that affected youth development and youth offending.

Poverty and economic factors were detected to be significant in 18 cases (60%) in this study.
Though none of the participants admitted that they committed their offences because of indigence, their economic conditions seemed to have a strong and persistent influence on the participants and their family. Poverty is considered a macro factor in the ecological paradigm, which affected many other risk factors in the lower levels, especially family factors. The image here, gathered from the life histories, was one of impoverishment, the desperation to earn extra sources of income by parents, often in other parts of the country away from the child, which led to a lack of a parent-child relationship, low parental involvement, inconsistent discipline, lack of supervision and neglect. A lack of parental supervision and persistent neglect would be accentuated by the need of parents to seek sources of income, in various instances in other distant locations, leaving the children unsupervised. Several participants suggested that lack of parental care and supervision were significant reasons for their offending, though they understood that such taxing work was needed to feed the family and the children. Most of the participants did not blame their parents for their offending, even in cases of abandonment, domestic violence or divorce. Neglect and a lack of supervision were factors that could spur involvement with delinquent activities and antisocial friends, as well as offending.

The youthful Vietnamese society that comes into view in these interviews was one of technological enthusiasm and engagement, often in the area of violence and pornography. Almost every participant who was involved with the internet played online violent games as well (19 out of 23 participants). Several admitted an addiction to internet use and games, while others did not. At least 15 participants (50%) were highly engaged with games and the internet. The desperation for funding such habits led, effectively, to instances of crime. This need for sustaining finance had direct consequences: seeking money via loans from others, stealing money and objects from family members and even committing serious and violent crimes to take the victim’s belongings by such means as robbery, robbery by snatching and even murder. Though the offences were the combination of many risk factors, it was clear that the need of money to fund games and access the internet provided an incentive for these participants to commit their crimes. This was identified in at least eight cases (26.7%).

To add to the general motif of continuous dysfunction, those in the interviewed sample would also have to return, after a violent school environment, to an equally violent neighbourhood. Several risk factors related to neighbourhood dysfunction included involvement with gangs, violence in the community and the availability of drugs and firearms. Those interviewed
were exposed to a world of weapons, and temptations to resolve disputes in using them. Many participants also admitted that they had witnessed violence and gang activity not only at school but also in the communities where they lived. Twenty-three participants (76.7%) also joined gangs and many of them were involved in fighting and antisocial behaviour before being arrested.

A feature of the life histories under review also involved the presence of drug taking. While in itself an offence in Vietnam, these were compounded by the availability of drugs. At least two offenders were addicted to heroin (Duc – Case 5 and Hoang – Case 11) – both claimed that they committed their offence because of their craving. Both were punished and incarcerated twice, the second time after relapsing into addiction after being released from prison. What the participants revealed was a thriving, active and importantly easily accessible market, given that they could even buy drugs in the internet agencies or order ‘ice’ by phone. This was a significant community problem, given that both drug selling and buying were criminal activities while those who abused drugs were at an extremely high risk of offending when they needed money for drugs, especially when having cravings (Hart et al. 2007; Heilbrun, Goldstein & Redding 2005). Therefore, the availability of drugs was significant for youth involvement in offending, and was demonstrated in many cases in this study.

10.2.3.6 The issue of policing

The interviews revealed a sense of under-enforcement and mismanagement, a lack of interest in policing regulations regarding the handling of alcohol consumption, management of games and the internet, management of firearms, weapons and other support equipment and handling of crimes and other illegal activities. The thematic analysis of the thirty cases revealed significant impacts of these factors in increasing the likelihood of youth offending. Many risk factors in school, family and community arose in environments free or, at the very least, under-vigilant policing. Instances of domestic violence were ignored; school violence, gang affiliation, games addiction and the availability of drugs and firearms were similarly not seen as priority areas of policing. It could be argued that policing, in a sense, had failed in this regard.
10.2.4 The public officers’ perspectives

10.2.4.1 Risk factors for youth offending

Chapter Eight presented the findings from the interviews with the public officers about their perceptions of the risk factors for youth offending, as well as the effectiveness of the intervention and prevention programs. In the views of these officers, various risk factors stood out. This was interesting in so far as it provided a snapshot view of the police enforcement mechanism in Vietnam, including attitudes towards youth crime. The conservative approach, which is one uninformed by broader criminological awareness of the role of risk, victimhood and concerned, and instead, focus on the ‘good’ moral family, played a part. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the officers reflected on individual character and personality tendencies including low self-control, impulsiveness and risk-taking behaviour, which might increase the likelihood of their offending. Regarding peers, most officers stated that young people had a strong need for being involved with peer groups and they were more likely to be influenced by their peers. All of the interviewees agreed that peer influence was also a significant risk factor in youth offending. The officials tended to focus on specific factors, namely, the negative impacts of school violence and the management of students at the school, including safety, school violence and the content of the curriculum. They also stressed the roles of family and school in the proper development of young people, suggesting that risk factors in family and school could lead to negative outcomes. The interviewed subjects reflected on what was perceived to be an inadequacy in terms of education and a deficient schooling system. Some officers stressed that while parents focused mostly on working, they spent less time and care for the children, a reflection more broadly on the socio-economic disruptions in Vietnam. Also, it was noted by some officers that school discipline and management with the students were not effective and consistent in preventing them from offending, factors which, in their view, facilitated an environment conducive to future offending.

Most public officers stressed the negative influences of the internet and violent games on young people and their involvement in offending. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given the disputes surrounding global and unfettered access to the Internet in Vietnam (DM Nguyen 2014). While authorities may attempt to restrict access to specific websites in the name of morality, citizens will try to oppose this.
Several issues related to dysfunctional neighbourhoods such as the presence of violence, the availability of drugs and weapons, gambling, prostitution and other criminal activities were also mentioned as possible contributing factors to youth offending. There was a continuing theme of dysfunctionality: neighbourhood dysfunction, fluid access to weapons, porous borders with other countries enabling trade and trafficking, and poor regulation and management, which significantly increase the likelihood of youth offending.

10.2.4.2 Youth offending prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders

The public officers were asked about their attitudes toward the rehabilitation of the young offenders and the prevention of offending. They were requested to evaluate the effectiveness and the shortcomings of the existing intervention programs and policies. In general, most participants agreed that there were several advantages of current intervention and prevention programs with youth offending and that was the reason why there was a drop in youth offending in Vietnam recently. The officers also reflected on the limits of existing youth offending prevention strategies, including a lack of controlling online games and the internet and other social problems; school management issues; jailing juveniles; a lack of a juvenile justice system; and the lack of supports for young people to reintegrate into the community after release.

10.3 Research limitations

Although the present study makes a significant contribution to the extant literature regarding risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam, limitations need to be acknowledged. It should be emphasised that this research utilised the life history approach, which has distinct strengths but a notable limitation in terms of the nature of the sample, which limited to only 30 interviews. As well, it only focused on young male offenders, who first committed offences when they were less than 18 years old. All of the participants were incarcerated in selected prisons in the North of Vietnam at the time the interviews were conducted. Therefore, female offenders, and those males released from prison, were excluded from the sample for this research, while offenders from the South of Vietnam were not included in the sample.

77 These participants made this conclusion according to the reports of the MPS.
10.3.1 Sample size

As noted in Chapter Three, the life history methodology focuses on depth rather than the breadth of the information collected, meaning that the sample size might be as small as an individual, but still be a meaningful outcome. To that end, only thirty young male offenders were recruited for the interview. Though this approach could collect in-depth information about the life histories of the offenders, and might suggest an explanation for their involvement in offending, it is important to note that the finding may be difficult to generalise to a larger population due to the limitations of the sample size (Lewis 2008).

10.3.2 The role of the researcher in this study

Among the ethical concerns when conducting research is the role of the researcher. Masip et al. (2005) note that police officers are more biased than non-officers when judging a statement from an offender as deceptive, which is labelled as the ‘investigator bias effect’ (Meissner & Kassin 2002). As the truthfulness of the interviewee is normally significant in the police officers’ work, they could develop a ‘generalized communicative suspicion (GCS)’ (Masip et al. 2005). This would apply to gathering life histories of youth criminals, with the officer potentially biased of not believing the prisoners. Socialising within the police force may develop the suspicion among officers, which may increase the likelihood judgments about deceptive conduct (Masip et al. 2005).

The researcher who conducts this current study is a police officer in Vietnam specialised in the area of criminal investigation. He also has experience in working with the offenders in term of criminal investigation activities such as interrogation or investigative interview. From the beginning of this study, the role of the researcher has been seriously appraised, given that the interviews were conducted in prison (King & Liebling 2008). The researcher was clearly aware of this GCS issue and his responsibility of ethically conducting the research. The researcher further noted a transformation of his own attitudes towards those interviewed in further understanding the sample, using the life history technique.

10.3.3 Location of the participants

Only three prisons in the North of Vietnam, not very far from Hanoi, were selected as the site of the study due to the time limitations and other logistical conditions related to the conduct of the research. There was a consequent imbalance in the sample characteristics in term of
the location of residence. Without specifically intending to, all the participants interviewed came from the North of Vietnam, while none were from the areas of the South. Given that there may be differences between the Northern and the Southern regions regarding geography, socio-culture, economy, demography and history, this limitation should be taken into account in assessing the risk factors for youth offending when considering young offenders in the South of Vietnam. However, broader disruptive influences (technology, poverty) are not exclusive to the North. To that end, it could be assumed that the findings of these factors may be applied in investigating the risk factors for youth offending in the South of Vietnam.

10.3.4 The selection of incarcerated participants

As all of the participants in this study were recruited from juvenile offenders who were serving their punishment in prison, there was a limitation in collecting their life histories from other sources of information to supplement the data for life history analysis. The data strongly relied on the life history interview with the participants and their prison files, given that some of them did not permit their prison files to be accessed. This thesis revealed, to a degree, the inadequate nature of the documentary record as part of the Vietnamese prison system regarding young offenders. The life history approach in this study, therefore, supplemented, if not challenged, existing official documents in the sparsity of their information. The life history technique might also bring the issue of truthfulness into play, but this should also be measured by how complete the prison document record on the inmates and criminal history.

Though all of the participants were adults at the time the interviews were conducted, most had been incarcerated since they were less than 18 years old and did not have a chance to experience and evaluate the nature of their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. The exclusion of offenders released from prison in the sample of this research was a limitation which led to a lack of further information about their rehabilitation and reintegration in the community from their own experiences.

10.3.5 The exclusion of female offenders

This study could only focus on investigating the risk factors for youth offending from the life histories of the young male offenders. Young female offenders were excluded. This was also a limitation, given the increasing attention on female offending (although the overwhelming
numbers of offences are still committed by males). However, as the risk factors for female youth offending had been identified as different from the risk factors for male youth offending (as discussed in Chapter Three), while the issues of ethics and time for the research occurred, this limitation seemed to be unavoidable for the terms of this Ph.D. thesis.

10.4 Research contributions

The most significant contribution of this study is in terms of methodology, in which the life history approach is utilised for conducting research in the penological and criminological field in Vietnam. The interviews of public officials, coupled with life history accounts, will, it is hoped, enable the implementation of sharper, more focused and informed strategies on intervention programs. The better understanding of risk factors for youth offending revealed by this study may shed light in improving the quality of intervention programs to reduce the incidence of youth offending in Vietnam, and also lead to its prevention. The contributions of this research to the theoretical aspects of risk factors for youth offending is also important in applying the risk factor paradigm while also taking into account the ecological approach in studying youth offending in Vietnam.

10.4.1 Theoretical contributions

In investigating the risk factors for youth offending using the life histories of young offenders, this research has made an important contribution to the body of knowledge of youth offending in Vietnam. As there was a lack of research on risk factors associated with youth offending in Vietnam, the understanding and application of this paradigm to study youth offending is still limited. Previous studies in Vietnam had considered several risk factors for youth offending, but they mostly focused on the causal effects of these factors on the offences committed by the young people. Only HN Nguyen (2015) utilised the risk factors paradigm to explain the likelihood of youth offending, while others limited their inquiries into the causes of youth crime (CB Do 2000, DT Ho 2002, HO Ngo 2010, DM Nguyen 2014). Therefore, in general, there is a lack of understanding about how risk factors can contribute to the background of youth offending, a deficiency which this study hopes to alleviate, at least in part. Furthermore, together with the study of HN Nguyen (2015), this study contributes to the further application of the risk factors paradigm in the study of youth offending in Vietnam.

Findings from this research may supplement a better understanding of the risk factors for
youth offending when viewed from the perspective of the young offenders. Furthermore, the ecological approach was also employed to explain the relationship between the risk factors at different levels in a three-tiered hierarchy of effects, providing a different view of risk factors for youth offending. This view is important as it showed that particular factors at the macro level, seemingly not very relevant to youth issues, actually had a significant influence on the development of youth offending, including such factors as poverty, the management of technology and the policing of the community. The combination of findings from previous studies and findings from this study will broaden the understanding of risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam. Given that the study of risk factors for youth offending was still not common in Vietnam, the contributions of this study to the understanding of risk factors for youth offending in the context of Vietnam is more significant.

10.4.2 Practical contributions

This study’s practical contribution lies in the field of understanding youth offending and risk factors for youth offending studies in Vietnam. The investigation of risk factors for youth offending from the life histories of young offenders not only provided a better understanding of the risk factors but may also raise awareness on the part of the authorities about appraising new strategies and approaches to enhance the prevention of youth offending. Moreover, the understanding of the relationship between risk factors in different domains in contributing to youth offending was also significant in this research, as it might lead to a better response to the youth offending phenomenon.

More importantly, a better understanding of risk factors for youth offending will directly influence the effectiveness of intervention programs in dealing with youth crimes. From the findings of this study, implications for more effective approaches in dealing with youth offending in Vietnam was considered. While not necessarily improving the awareness of risk factors among the whole society and thus the situation of youth offending may not change immediately, it is expected that more studies focusing on the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam in the future, will contribute significantly to the prevention of youth offending and recidivism in Vietnam. The findings from this study will provide the areas related to youth offending study, which needs to be further investigated in the future studies. Given that the life history method has never been utilised in studies of risk factors for youth offending, this study will be the starting point for that.
10.4.3. Methodological contributions

In Vietnam, though previous studies have attempted to deal with crimes and youth offending prevention, most were conducted based on the official dimension, gathering data from police and court reports. These reports would have been inexact, ignoring approaches specific to the individual and socio-economic circumstances of the youths in question. There were only some studies which collected qualitative data from the interviews with the young offenders such as NT Dang (2007), DT Ho (2002) and HT Nguyen (2004). The most recent research on youth offending collecting data from interviewing young offenders was conducted by HN Nguyen (2015), but the primary method of this study was by means of a survey. As a consequence, the interviews only made a contribution limited to one question about the most important risk factors for their offending. The advantage of the life history approach is that it allows the researcher to investigate at a deep level the life experience and events of the young offenders, perhaps identifying a point that may well have been missed in officer reports or official statistics. In fact, the data collected from the life history interviews in this study had shown much richer information than that collected from the offender’s files, court judgments or any other documents related to the offenders. The stories these offenders told about their lives were unique and significant in understanding their lives and their involvement in offending.

Given that this approach is new not only to the area of criminal justice study but also other areas of studies in Vietnam, the life history method potentially affords a significant approach to understanding the risk factors for youth offending when it could be applied in a broader context. This study, to that end, should become a significant reference for other scholarly works in terms of understanding and using the life history method in the future regarding the study of Vietnemense penological culture. This shows the significant methodological contribution of this study to the study of youth offending.

10.5 Recommendations for future research

The evaluation of the limitations of this study has highlighted the aspects that could be improved in future research about youth offending in Vietnam. Due to a lack of studies on the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam, further work in this area should be carried out in the future to better understand and respond to the circumstances of youth offending in Vietnam.
What is suggested here is a refocusing of traditional penology research using the life-history method as a way of understanding the complexity of policy and policing approaches to youth offending, given that there has never been any other life history research on the life histories of the young offenders in Vietnam. Moreover, to ensure that the findings have greater integrity and more consistent reliability, future research should focus on a larger sample across the whole of Vietnam, which would assist in generalizing the results of these studies.

Future research should also focus on released young offenders to better understand their life experience in jail and their subsequent rehabilitation and reintegration into Vietnamese society. Moreover, this approach will provide researchers further opportunities to collect more detailed information of the participants from other sources using the life history approach. This aligns with HN Nguyen (2015) who recommends that longitudinal studies should be carried out with specific groups of offenders to understand the relationship between the risk factors for youth offending and particular types and patterns of crimes. Furthermore, the life history approach should be extended to apply to studying female youth offending in Vietnam, given the emerging seriousness of the problem.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

APPENDIX 1.1: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

(For the offenders currently in prison)

Project title: ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’

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Dear: ……………………………………….

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and make sure that you understand its contents before deciding to participate. If you have any questions, please ask one of the investigators.

1. Who is involved in this research project?

This research is being conducted as part of a Ph.D. program at RMIT University, Australia with the supervision of Dr Binoy Kampmark and Professor Desmond Cahill. The research project is ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’. The principal research student, Toan Quang Le, will be the person you meet.

The researcher’s role is to interview participants who are residents of correctional institutions to identify and assess the risk factors for youth offending from their life histories.

This research has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee. Official permission to conduct the fieldwork was granted on the grounds that it poses no considerable
harm or risk to participants. However, you have full rights to refuse to answer particular questions without explanation.

2. Why do we contact you?

We would like to invite you to take part in this research because you were involved in youth offending and currently executing punishment in prison. You know the factors, which affect youth offending, and rehabilitation of young offenders. Therefore, your responses will be both important for both understanding of youth offending and improving the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and rehabilitation in future.

3. What is the project about?

This project is a Ph.D. thesis, which is funded by an Australian Award Scholarship from AusAID. The study is about the risk factors for youth offending from the respondent’s life histories. The goal of this research is to examine the risk factors for youth offending through the participants’ life histories other data related to the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of the offenders. The questions which need to be addressed include: what are the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam.

4. If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to answer the questions about your relevant perceptions with the risk factors for youth. You will be asked about your life events related to family, school, peers and other social factors and give your evaluation of the effects of these factors on your offending. You will also be asked about your understanding and experience of youth offending and offenders rehabilitation.

5. What are the possible risks or disadvantages?

There are no considerable risks or disadvantages to you or to your daily life, as the data will be secured for the anonymity and confidentiality and for the purpose of research only. Pseudonyms will be used to make sure that your private information will be kept secretly. The final results of the study and your personal data collected in the course of the research will be available to you upon your request.

Another issue, which need to be considered, is that unreported crimes may be disclose during the interviews but the aim of this research is not to collect this kind of information. Therefore, you are cautioned to think thoroughly of the things you should say before responding. You may also refuse to answer specific question if you think that they may reveal sensitive, incriminating information about you or any other people. If any information about unreported
crime is recorded, the materials will then be destroyed immediately before we continue the interview, as there is no requirement for mandatory reporting with these unreported crimes. Therefore, there is no risk of unreported crimes disclosure for you or any other people.

However, if you are concerned about your responses to any of the given questions, you have the right to refuse to answer or even cease the interviews immediately without any explanation. You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you decline participation. If you wish, Mr Toan Quang Le is available to discuss your concerns directly and confidentially, and suggest appropriate follow-up steps.

6. What are the benefits if I participate in this research?

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and confidential, thus, there is no direct benefit to you. However, the final publication with key findings would be beneficial to the society in understanding of youth offending, youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation in Vietnam in the future. This will be also available to you on your request.

7. What will happen to the information I provide?

The information you provide will be safeguarded in a safe place in RMIT University by the research. The given information will not be identified in any stage of this study as pseudonyms will be used instead of real names. Data will be aggregated for analysis. The results of this study will be disseminated in the form of a thesis, journal articles and conference papers. The research data will be kept securely at RMIT University and permanently destroyed after the study completes.

8. What are my rights as a participant?

As the participant of this research, you have the following rights:

- The right to decline answering questions or withdraw from participation in the research at any time;
- The right to request to cease any recording related to the interviews with you;
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed;
- The right to have any questions related to your participation answered at any time.

9. Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If necessary, you may contact the researchers through the following address:
- Dr. Binoy Kampmark, School of Global, Urban, and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au  Phone: (+613) 99252174

- Toan Quang Le, Ph.D. Candidate, School of Global, Urban, and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Email: Quangtoan.le@rmit.edu.au

Phone: (+61) 42472322 (in Australia); (+84) 983352322 (in Vietnam)

However, as you are in prison at the moment, you may not contact us directly because of the limitation of condition in the prison. Thus, in case you need to contact us, please let your supervisors/prison staff know. We will make sure that your request will reach us by arranging with the prison managers to receive request from the participants of this research and pass the requests to the research team.

10. **What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to participate?**

Although your participation in this research will not bring you and any considerable harm or risks, you may experience uncomfortable feelings when we ask about your life histories, including history of offending and other unhappy moments in the past. Moreover, your responses may be used for further studies or publications in similar disciplines to this study. However the anonymity and confidentiality of the information will stay the same. Please consider this before you decide to participate in the research.

Yours sincerely,

Toan Quang Le

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If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001, Australia. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
APPENDIX 1.2: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

(For the public servants)

Project title: ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’

Investigators:

**Dr. Binoy Kampmark**, chief investigator  
Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au  
Phone: (+613) 99252174

**Prof. Desmond Cahill**, co-investigator  
Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au  
Phone: (+613) 99254981

**Toan Quang Le**, Ph.D. candidate  
Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au  
Phone: (+61) 424742322

Dear: ………………………………………...

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

1. Who is involved in this research project?

This research is being conducted as part of a Ph.D. program at RMIT University, Australia with the supervision of Dr Binoy Kampmark and Professor Desmond Cahill. The research project is ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’. The principal research student, Toan Quang Le, will be the person you meet.

The researcher will interview participants who are working as public officers in the area of youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation to identify and assess the risk factors for youth offending from their life histories.

This research has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee. Official permission to conduct the fieldwork was granted on the grounds that it poses no considerable
harm or risk to participants. However, participants have full rights to refuse to answer or give no answers without any dependency or pressures from investigators or others.

2. Why have you been approached?

We would like to invite you to provide information and data for this research because you are working in the areas, which is involved with youth offending, youth offending prevention and rehabilitation in Vietnam. You have a thorough understanding of the factors, which affect youth offending, youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation in Vietnam. Therefore, your responses will be crucial for both deeper understanding of youth offending and improving the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and rehabilitation in Vietnam in future.

3. What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

This project is a Ph.D. thesis, which is funded by an Australian Award Scholarship from AusAID. This study is about the risk factors for youth offending and the policies and practices of youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation. The goal of this research is to examine the risk factors for youth offending through the offenders’ life histories and in the relationship with policies and practices related to the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of the offenders. The questions which need to be addressed include: what are the risk factors for youth offending; and how to improve the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation in Vietnam.

4. If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to answer the questions about your relevant perceptions with the risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam and the effectiveness of the prevention and rehabilitation programs through interviews. You will also be asked about your understanding and experience of the risk factors for youth offending, youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation as well as your recommendation for improving the effectiveness of the prevention of youth offending and rehabilitation of the offenders.

5. What are the possible risks or disadvantages?

There are no considerable risks or disadvantages to you or to your daily life, as the data will be secured for the anonymity and confidentiality and for the purpose of research only. Pseudonyms will be used to make sure that your private information will be kept secretly. The final results of the study and your personal data collected in the course of the research will be available to you upon your request.
However, if you are concerned about your responses to any of the given questions, you have the right to refuse to answer or even cease the interviews immediately without any explanation. You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you decline participation. If you wish, Mr Toan Quang Le is available to discuss your concerns directly and confidentially and suggest appropriate follow-up steps.

6. What are the benefits associated with participation?

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and confidential, thus, there is no direct benefit to you. However, the final publication with key findings would be beneficial to the understanding of youth offending, youth offending prevention and rehabilitation of young offenders in Vietnam in the future. This will be also available to you on your request and it may be helpful to your work as a policy maker or staff of government departments or institutes related to youth offending prevention and offender rehabilitation.

7. What will happen to the information I provide?

The information you provide will be safeguarded in a safe place in RMIT University by the research. The given information will not be identified in any stage of this study as pseudonyms will be used instead of real names. Data will be aggregated for analysis. The results of this study will be disseminated in the form of thesis, journal articles and conference papers. The research data will be kept securely at RMIT University and permanently destroyed after the study completes.

8. What are my rights as a participant?

As the participant of this research, you have the following rights:

- The right to decline answering questions or withdraw from participation in the research at any time;
- The right to request to cease any recording related to the interviews with you;
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed;
- The right to have any questions related to your participation answered at any time.

9. Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If necessary, you may contact the researchers through the following address:
If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001, Australia. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
PHỤ LỤC 1: THÔNG TIN VỀ VIỆC THAM GIA NGHIÊN CỨU
PHỤ LỤC 1.1: THƯ MỜI THAM GIA DỰ ÁN NGHIÊN CỨU
(Dùng cho phảm nhân đang thi hành án trong trại giam)

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yêu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đối’

Nghiên cứu viên:

Tiến Sĩ Binoy Kampmark, nghiên cứu viên chính;

Điện thoại: (+613) 99252174; Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au

Giáo sư Desmond Cahill, tham gia nghiên cứu;

Điện thoại: (+613) 99254981; Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au

Lê Quang Toàn, Nghiên cứu sinh;

Điện thoại: (+61) 424742322; Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au

Kính gửi: ........................................

Trân trọng kính mời anh tham gia vào một dự án nghiên cứu do Viện đại học công nghệ Hoàng gia Melbourne, Australia (Đại học RMIT) tổ chức. Anh hãy đọc kỹ thư mời này và đảm bảo rằng mình thực sự hiểu đầy đủ nội dung trước khi quyết định có tham gia hay không. Nếu có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về dự án nghiên cứu, anh có thể hỏi trực tiếp một trong các nghiên cứu viên.

1. Những ai liên quan đến dự án này?

Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện với tư cách là một luân án tiến sĩ đại trà trường Đại học RMIT, Australia, với sự hướng dẫn chính của Tiến sỹ Binoy Kampmark. Tên đề tài nghiên cứu là: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đối’. Nghiên cứu sinh thực hiện đề tài này là Thạc sĩ Lê Quang Toàn, người mà anh chỉ sẽ gặp trực tiếp.

Để thực hiện đề tài, các nghiên cứu viên sẽ tiến hành phỏng vấn những người tham gia bao gồm các phạm nhân đang thi hành án trong trại giam để tìm hiểu về những nguyên nhân dẫn đến hành vi phạm tội thông qua lịch sử cuộc đối họ.

Để tài này đã được Hội đồng Đạo đức nghiên cứu Trường đại học RMIT phê duyệt và cho phép tiến hành thu thập số liệu tại Việt Nam với điều kiện sẽ không gây bất cứ tổn hại hoặc mối đe dọa nào với những người tham gia. Mặc dù vậy, những người tham gia có toàn quyền
quyet dinh khong tra loi mot cau hoi nao do neu ho khong muon ma khong phai giai thich hay chiu ap luc tu phia nhung nhan vien cu vien hay tu bat ky ngtruoi nao khac.

2. Tai sao anh lai duoc lua chon de tham gia nhan vien cu nay?

Chung toi muon moi anh chinh tham gia cung cap thong tin cho nhan vien cu nay boi vinh da tung co lien quan den nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi va hiem dang thi hanh an trong trai gian. La nhung nguoi co lien quan truc tiep, anh co nhung hieu biet ve nguyen nhan, dieu kiem dan den nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi va cong tac phong ngua nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi o Viet Nam. Chinh va va, nhung thong tin do anh cung cap du ve nguyen nhan, dieu kiem cua toi pham do nguoi chua thanh niem gay ra hay cong tac phong ngua nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi du co y nghia het suc quan trong doi voi viiec hiem ro hon ve tinh trang nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi cung nhu nang cao hiem qua phong ngua nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi o Viet Nam trong tương lai.

3. Nghi du cua de tai se nghi vien cu nay?

Day la mot lan anh chi duoc thuc hien tai truong dai hoc RMIT, do Chinh phu Uc (dai dien la AusAID) tai tro. De tai nay tap trung nghi vien cu ve nguyen nhan, dieu kiem cua toi pham do nguoi chua thanh niem gay ra cung nhu cach sinh va thuc te cung lien quan den phong ngua nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi o Viet Nam. Muc diem cua de tai la danh gia muc do anh huong cua cac nguyen nhan, dieu kiem lam anh huong den tinh trang nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi trong moi quan he voi chinh sach va thuc te cong tac phong ngua va giao duoc, cai tao nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi o Viet Nam. cac cau hoi can tra loi bao gom nhung yeu to nguyen cua nay tuc don den tinh trang nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi va lai the nang cao hiem qua viiec phong ngua, giao duoc, cai tao nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi.

4. Nguoi do do y tham gia, toi se phai thuc hien nhung cong viec gi?

Nguoi do do tham gia de tai nghi vien cu, anh se duoc moi tham gia phong van va tra loi cac cau hoi the hien quan diem, nhuan thuc cua anh ve cac yeu to anh huong den nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi hoac cong tac phong ngua, giao duoc, cai tao nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi hoac ca hai nhom tren. Anh se duoc hoi ve nhung su kiện trong cuoc doi cung nhu nhung trai nghiem cua ban than ve ban than, gia dinh, nha truong, ban be va cac yeu to xay hoi, cong dong cung co anh huong den viiec thuc hien toi pham. Anh chi cung se duoc hoi ve nhung hieu biet cua anh chi ve phong ngua, giao duoc cai tao nguoi chua thanh niem pham toi cung nhu dua ra nhung de xuat nam nang cao hiem qua phong ngua, giao duoc, cai tao nguoi chua thanh niem pham.
5. Có nguy hiểm gì không nếu tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này?

Chúng tôi đảm bảo rằng không có bất gì nguy hiểm hay tác động tiêu cực nào đến cuộc sống bình thường của anh/bộ vị/tất cả các thôn tin thư pháp được sẽ được mã hóa để đảm bảo tính bí mật, riêng tư và chi nhánh mục đích duy nhất là phục vụ nghiên cứu. Anh có quyền yêu cầu được xem kết quả nghiên cứu và những thông tin đã được thu thập thông qua nghiên cứu này.

Một vấn đề nữa cần để cấp là việc lưu thông tin về những tổ phạm chưa bị phát hiện trong quá trình phòng vấn, nhưng nghiên cứu này không nhằm thu thập các thông tin đó. Vì vậy, để ngăn anh suy nghĩ kỹ về những điều anh sẽ nói trước khi trả lời câu hỏi, và anh thảm chí có thể từ chối trả lời câu hỏi nếu anh thấy những câu hỏi đó có nguy cơ làm lộ thông tin về những tổ phạm chưa bị phát hiện của anh hoặc của bất kỳ người nào khác. Trong trường hợp có thông tin về những tổ phạm như vậy với tinh tế đưa ra, bằng ghi am và bản ghi phòng vấn sẽ được hủy ngay tại chỗ trước khi cuộc phòng vấn được tiếp tục, bởi vì chúng tôi không bất ngờ phải trình bày thông tin đó với bất kỳ ai. Vì vậy, không có nguy cơ bị lộ thông tin về những tổ phạm chưa bị phát hiện của anh và những người khác.

Mặc dù vậy, nếu anh cảm thấy lo ngại về việc trả lời bất kỳ câu hỏi nào trong quá trình phòng vấn, anh hoàn toàn có quyền không trả lời câu hỏi đó hoặc để nghĩ dừng cuộc phòng vấn hoặc ngay lập tức mà không cần đến lý do. Chúng tôi đảm bảo anh sẽ không gặp phải bất lợi nào nếu từ chối tham gia cuộc phòng vấn. Trong trường hợp cần thiết, anh Lê Quang Toàn luôn sẵn sàng trao đổi trực tiếp riêng với anh về những vấn đề trên và đề xuất các bước tiếp theo nếu anh có yêu cầu với chúng tôi.

6. Người tham gia nghiên cứu sẽ có được những lợi ích gì?

Sự tham gia của anh/chị vào nghiên cứu này hoàn toàn mang tính tự nguyện và cá nhân, vì vậy sẽ không có lợi ích trực tiếp nào đối với anh. Mặc dù vậy, kết quả nghiên cứu cuối cùng sẽ có giá trị quan trọng đối với việc hiểu rõ hơn về tình trạng người chua thành niên phạm tội và nâng cao hiểu quả phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo người chua thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam sau này. Trong trường hợp có yêu cầu, anh/chị có quyền tiếp nhận kết quả nghiên cứu.

7. Thông tin do tôi cung cấp sẽ được sử dụng như thế nào?

Bất cứ thông tin nào mà anh cung cấp trong nghiên cứu này sẽ được bảo vệ tuyệt đối bí mật. Trong bất cứ giai đoạn nào của quá trình nghiên cứu, các thông tin do đều được mã hóa và không thể xác định được nguồn gốc. Các thông tin thu thập được sẽ được tổng hợp phục vụ cho quá trình nghiên cứu, và thay vì dùng tên thật của những người tham gia, hệ thống tên giả hoặc mã hóa sẽ được sử dụng.
Kết quả nghiên cứu sẽ được sử dụng dưới dạng luận án, bài báo khoa học hoặc bài hội thảo.
Dữ liệu có liên quan đến quá trình nghiên cứu sẽ được bảo quản một cách an toàn tại trường đại học RMIT và sau đó sẽ bị xóa vĩnh viễn.

8. Tôi có quyền gì khi tham gia nghiên cứu này?
Là một người tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, anh có các quyền sau đây:

- Quyền không trả lời câu hỏi và đừng tham gia phỏng vấn bất kỳ lúc nào;
- Quyền yêu cầu đúng hoặc không ghi âm các buổi phỏng vấn;
- Quyền yêu cầu rút lại và tiêu hủy tất cả những thông tin anh đã cung cấp;
- Quyền được nghe câu trả lời cho bất cực câu hỏi nào có liên quan đến nghiên cứu này.

9. Tôi cần liên lạc với ai nếu có thắc mắc cần giải đáp liên quan đến đề tài?
Trong trường hợp cần thiết, anh có thể liên lạc trực tiếp với các nghiên cứu viên qua địa chỉ sau:

- **Tiến Sĩ Binoy Kampmark**, Khoa nghiên cứu toàn cầu, đô thị và xã hội, Đại học RMIT, Victoria, Australia. (School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia). Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au
  Điện thoại: (+613) 99252174;
- **Lê Quang Toàn**, nghiên cứu sinh, Khoa nghiên cứu toàn cầu, đô thị và xã hội, Đại học RMIT, Victoria, Australia. (School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia). Email: Quangtoan.le@rmit.edu.au
  Điện thoại: (+61) 42472322 (tại Australia); (+84) 983352322 (tại Việt Nam).

Vi anh đang tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, anh có thể liên lạc trực tiếp với chúng tôi để có thể gặp khó khăn do những hạn chế về điều kiện trong quá trình nghiên cứu. Do đó, chúng tôi sẽ bàn bạc với bạn một số giải pháp để đảm bảo chức năng anh cần liên lạc, chúng tôi sẽ nhận được những thông tin từ đó.

10. Có vấn đề gì khác mà tôi cần cần nhắc trước khi quyết định tham gia vào nghiên cứu này hay không?
Mặc dù việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này sẽ không gây*x* hay phiền phức nào đáng kể cho anh nhưng anh có thể có giắc không thoải mái khi chúng tôi để cập đến lịch sử bản thân anh, bao gồm lịch sự phạm tội và những chuyển động không vui trong quá khứ. Ngoài ra, những thông tin mà anh chỉ cung cấp trong nghiên cứu này có thể được sử dụng như tài liệu tham khảo trong các nghiên cứu về sau trong lĩnh vực này, những mức độ bảo mật thông tin cần thiết của các tài liệu đó vẫn được duy trì. Hãy cần nhắc thành trọng trước khi quyết định tham gia.
Chân thành cảm ơn sự công tác của anh!

Lê Quang Toàn

Trong trường hợp anh có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này mà không muốn trao đổi trực tiếp với các nghiên cứu viên, anh có thể liên lạc với cán bộ phụ trách về Hệ thống quản lý tính trung thực và đào tạo nghiên cứu, Đại học RMIT tại địa chỉ: GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001, Australia; Điện thoại: (613) 9925 2251 hoặc email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
PHỤ LỤC 1.2. THU MỞI THAM GIA DỰ ÁN NGHIÊN CỨU

(Dùng cho cán bộ dang công tác trong các cơ quan nhà nước)

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chua thành niêm phán tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đời’

Ngôn ngữ: 

Nghiên cứu viên:

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Giao sư Desmond Cahill, tham gia nghiên cứu;
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Lê Quang Toàn, nghiên cứu sinh;
Diễn thoại: (+61) 424742322; Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au

Kính gửi: …………………………………

Trước hết, kính mời anh/chị tham gia vào một dự án nghiên cứu do Viện đại học công nghệ Hoàng gia Melbourne, Australia (Đại học RMIT) tổ chức. Anh/chị hãy đọc kỹ thư mời này và đảm bảo rằng mình thực sự hiểu đầy đủ nội dung trước khi quyết định có tham gia hay không. Nếu có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về dự án nghiên cứu, anh/chị có thể hỏi trực tiếp một trong các nghiên cứu viên.

1. Những ai liên quan đến dự án nghiên cứu này?


Để thực hiện đề tài, các nghiên cứu viên sẽ tiến hành风暴 vấn những người tham gia bao gồm các cán bộ dang công tác trong các cơ quan nhà nước ở các lĩnh vực có liên quan đến phòng ngừa người chua thành niêm phán tội và giáo dục, cải tạo người chua thành niêm phán tội để tìm hiểu về nguyên nhân điều kiện dẫn đến người chua thành niêm phán tội, hiểu quả của việc tiến phòng ngừa và giáo dục cải tạo người chua thành niêm phán tội.

Để tài này đã được Hội đồng Đào dục nghiên cứu Trường đại học RMIT phê duyệt và cho phép tiến hành thu thập số liệu tại Việt Nam với điều kiện sẽ không gây bất cứ tổn hại hoặc mô hình nào với những người tham gia. Mặc dù vậy, những người tham gia có toàn quyền
quyết định không trả lời một câu hỏi nào đó nếu họ không muốn mà không phải giải thích hay chịu áp lực từ phía những nghiên cứu viên hay từ bất kỳ người nào khác.

2. Tại sao anh/chị lại được lựa chọn để tham gia nghiên cứu này?

Chúng tôi muốn mời anh/chị tham gia cung cấp thông tin cho nghiên cứu này bởi vì anh/chị đang công tác trong lĩnh vực có liên quan đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội hoặc phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội. Do đó, anh/chị có những hiểu biết về nguyên nhân, điều kiện người chưa thành niên phạm tội và công tác phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam. Chính vì vậy, những thông tin do anh/chị cung cấp dược về nguyên nhân, điều kiện của tội phạm do người chưa thành niên gây ra hay công tác phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội đều có ý nghĩa hết sức quan trọng đối với việc hiểu rõ hơn về tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội cũng như nâng cao hiệu quả phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam trong tương lai.

3. Nội dung đề tài sẽ nghiên cứu?

Đây là một luận án Tiến sĩ được thực hiện tại trường đại học RMIT, do Chính phủ Úc (đại diện là AusAID) tài trợ. Đề tài này tập trung nghiên cứu về nguyên nhân, điều kiện của tội phạm do người chưa thành niên gây ra cũng như đánh giá các chính sách và thực tiễn có liên quan đến phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam. Mục đích của đề tài là đánh giá mức độ ảnh hưởng của các nguyên nhân, điều kiện dẫn đến tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội và thực tiễn công tác phòng ngừa và giáo dục, cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam. Các câu hỏi cần trả lời bao gồm những yêu tố như quốc tịch người, hướng đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội và làm thế nào để nâng cao hiệu quả giáo dục, cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội.

4. Nếu tôi đồng ý tham gia, tôi sẽ phải thực hiện những công việc gì?

Nếu đồng ý tham gia đề tài nghiên cứu, anh/chị sẽ được mời tham gia phỏng vấn và trả lời các câu hỏi thể hiện quan điểm, nhận thức của anh/chị về các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội hoặc công tác phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội hoặc các hành vi khác trên. Anh/chị sẽ được hỏi về những thông tin liên quan đến kinh nghiệm về các yếu tố nguy cơ, phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội cũng như đề xuất các giải pháp nâng cao hiệu quả.
5. Có nguy hiểm gì không nếu tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này?

Chúng tôi đảm bảo rằng không có bất gì nguy hiểm hay tác động tiêu cực nào đến cuộc sống bình thường của anh/chị bởi tất cả các thông tin thu thập được sẽ được mã hóa để đảm bảo tính bí mật, riêng tư và chất lượng mức dịch vụ là ph espect nghiệm cứu. Anh/chị có quyền yêu cầu được xem kết quả nghiên cứu và những thống anh/chị đã cung cấp trong nghiên cứu này.


6. Người tham gia nghiên cứu sẽ có được những lợi ích gì?


7. Thông tin do tôi cung cấp sẽ được sử dụng như thế nào?

Bất cứ thông tin nào mà anh/chị cung cấp trong nghiên cứu này sẽ được bảo vệ tuyệt đối bí mật. Trong bất cứ giai đoạn nào của quá trình nghiên cứu, các thông tin đó đều được mã hóa và không thể xác định được nguồn gốc. Các thông tin thu thập được sẽ được tổng hợp phục vụ cho quá trình nghiên cứu, và thay vì được tên thật của những người tham gia, hệ thống tên giả hoặc mã hóa sẽ được sử dụng.

Kết quả nghiên cứu sẽ được sử dụng dưới dạng luận án, bài báo khoa học hoặc bài hội thảo. Dữ liệu có liên quan đến quá trình nghiên cứu sẽ được bảo quản một cách an toàn tại trường đại học RMIT sau khi được xuất bản và sau đó sẽ bị xóa vĩnh viễn.

8. Tôi có quyền gì khi tham gia nghiên cứu này?

Là một người tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, anh/chị có các quyền sau đây:

- Quyền dừng tham gia vào nghiên cứu này bất kỳ thời điểm nào;
- Quyền yêu cầu dùng hoặc không ghi âm các buổi phòng vấn;
- Quyền yêu cầu rút lại và tiêu hủy tất cả những dữ liệu anh/chị đã cung cấp trong trường hợp các dữ liệu này chưa được sử dụng.
- Quyền được nghe câu trả lời cho các câu hỏi cơ liên quan đến nghiên cứu này.

9. Tôi cần liên lạc với ai nếu có thắc mắc cần giải đáp liên quan đến đề tài?

Trong trường hợp cần thiết, anh/chị có thể liên lạc trực tiếp với nghiên cứu viên qua địa chỉ sau:

- **Tiến Sĩ Binoy Kampmark,** Khoa nghiên cứu toàn cầu, đô thị và xã hội, Đại học RMIT, Victoria, Australia. (School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia). Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au
  Điện thoại: (+613) 99252174;

- **Lê Quang Toàn,** nghiên cứu sinh, Khoa nghiên cứu toàn cầu, đô thị và xã hội, Đại học RMIT, Victoria, Australia. (School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia). Email: Quangtoan.le@rmit.edu.au
  Điện thoại: (+61) 42472322 (tại Australia); (+84) 983352322 (tại Việt Nam).

10. Có vấn đề gì khác mà tôi cần cần nhắc trước khi quyết định tham gia vào nghiên cứu này hay không?

Những thông tin mà anh/chị cung cấp trong nghiên cứu này có thể được sử dụng như tài liệu tham khảo trong các nghiên cứu về sau trong lĩnh vực này nhưng tính bảo mật của thông tin vẫn được đảm bảo. Hãy cân nhắc trước khi quyết định tham gia.

Chân thành cảm ơn sự công tác của anh/chị!

Lê Quang Toàn

Trong trường hợp anh/chị có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này mà không muốn trao đổi trực tiếp với các nghiên cứu viên, anh/chị có thể liên lạc với cán bộ phụ trách về Hệ thống quản lý tính trung thực và đạo đức nghiên cứu, Đại học RMIT tại địa chỉ: GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001, Australia; Điện thoại: (613) 9925 2251 hoặc email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

Project Title: ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’

Investigators:

Dr. Binoy Kampmark, chief investigator
Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+613) 99252174

Prof. Desmond Cahill, co-investigator
Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+613) 99254981

Toan Quang Le, Ph.D. candidate
Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+61) 424742322

1. I have had the project explained to me and I have read the information sheet;

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described;

3. I agree: (circle if agree)
   - To be interviewed;
   - That my interview will be audio recorded.
   - That my court records will be used for this research.

4. I acknowledge that:
   a. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety);
   b. The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me;
   c. The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law;
   d. The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to chief investigator and principal student researcher. Any information, which will identify me, will not be used.
e. The data from this research related to me will only be used in the future research with my prior consent.

**Participant’s Consent**

Participant: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

\[(Signature)\]

**Witness:**

Witness: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

\[(Signature)\]

Participants should be given a photocopy of this PICF after it has been signed.
PHỤ LỤC 2: GIẢY ĐỒNG Y THAM GIA NGHIỆN CỨU

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đời’

Nghiên cứu viên:

Tien Si Binoy Kampmark, nghiên cứu viên chính;

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Giáo sư Desmond Cahill, tham gia nghiên cứu;

Điện thoại: (+613) 99254981; Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au

Lê Quang Toàn, Nghiên cứu sinh;

Điện thoại: (+61) 424742322; Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au

1. Tôi đã được đọc thông tin về nghiên cứu này và được giải thích về dự án nghiên cứu;

2. Tôi đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu này với các nội dung như đã nêu trên;

3. Tôi đồng ý:

   a. Tham gia nghiên cứu với tư cách là người được phỏng vấn;
   b. Cho phép ghi âm cuộc phỏng vấn;
   c. Cho phép sử dụng bản án và các tài liệu cá nhân của tôi phục vụ nghiên cứu này.

4. Tôi xác nhận:

   a. Tôi hiểu rằng việc tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và tôi có thể rút lui không tham gia nghiên cứu này vào bất cứ thời gian nào và tôi có thể rút lại những thông tin đã cung cấp trước đó (trừ trường hợp cần tiếp tục vì lý do an toàn);
   b. Dự án này chỉ nhằm phục vụ cho mục đích nghiên cứu và tôi sẽ không nhận được lợi ích trực tiếp nào từ nghiên cứu này;
   c. Tính riêng tư của những thông tin cá nhân do tôi cung cấp sẽ được bảo vệ bí mật và và sẽ chỉ được cung cấp và sử dụng với sự đồng ý của tôi hoặc bất bước theo quy định của pháp luật;
   d. Sự bí mật của thông tin đã thu thập được sẽ được bảo vệ trong suốt quá trình nghiên cứu cùng như sau khi đã hoàn thành nghiên cứu. Đủ liệu thu thập được sẽ được sử
dùng cho các án phẩm xuất bản và kết quả nghiên cứu cuối cùng sẽ được cung cấp cho nghiên cứu viên chính và nghiên cứu sinh. Bất cứ thông tin nào có thể dẫn đến việc xác định được thông tin cá nhân của tôi sẽ không được sử dụng.

e. Việc sử dụng các thông tin từ nghiên cứu này có liên quan đến tôi chỉ được tiến hành sau khi có sự đồng ý của tôi.

Sự đồng ý của người tham gia

Người tham gia: \hfill Ngày:  

(Chữ ký)

Người chứng kiến:

Người chứng kiến: \hfill Ngày:  

(Chữ ký)

Người tham gia sẽ được nhận một bản Thông tin về việc tham gia nghiên cứu
APPENDIX 3: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

PROJECT TITLE
Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending:
A life history approach

RESEARCHER
Dr. Binoy Kampmark, chief investigator
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School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, College of Design and Social Context, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH
This research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the risk factors for youth offending as well as youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offender in Vietnam (please see the attached Research Study information for more detail).

METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS
Because of your relevant experiences, you are being approached to assist this research through interview process. The main part of the interview will consist of asking and answering questions about the risk factors for youth offending, youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders. You also will be asked questions about yourself, your life and your experience related to youth offending.

POSSIBLE RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES
Apart from one to two hours of interview, we can foresee no risks for you. Your involvement in this study is definitely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, provided that doing so will not put the participants at risk. Your responses in the interviews will be kept anonymous and
confidential in the research thesis and related publications. All collected information will be aggregated and your responses will not be used outside the needs of the current study. Only aggregated data will be included in published reports on this study.

**ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS**

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the RMIT University. If you have any complaints about the conduct of this research project, please contact Dr. Peter Burke, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee Secretary on (+613) 9925 2251, or email: peter.burke@rmit.edu.au

For further information, please feel free to contact the researcher Toan Quang Le (see contact details above).

*Thank you for your interest in this study*
PHỤ LỤC 3: BẢN GIẢI THÍCH NGHIÊN CƯÚ

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đời’

Nghiên cứu viên:

Tiến Sĩ Binoy Kampmark, nghiên cứu viên chính;
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MỤC DÍCH NGHIÊN CƯÚ

Nghiên cứu này nhằm cung cấp một sự hiểu biết sâu sắc về những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội và phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cai tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội (để biết thêm chi tiết xin mời xem bản thông tin nghiên cứu kèm theo).

PHƯƠNG PHÁP VÀ YÊU CẦU VỀ THAM GIA

Với những kinh nghiệm liên quan, anh/chị được lựa chọn để hỗ trợ nghiên cứu này thông qua phỏng vấn. Phần chính của cuộc phỏng vấn bao gồm hỏi, đáp về những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội, phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội và giáo dục, cai tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội. Anh/chị cũng sẽ được hỏi một số thông tin về cá nhân, cuộc đời và kinh nghiệm có liên quan đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội.

RỦI RO VÀ BẤT TIẾN CÓ THỂ CÓ

Ngồi thời gian phỏng vấn khoảng 1 đến 2 giờ, có thể thay không có rủi ro nào cho anh/chị. Sự tham gia của anh/chị trong nghiên cứu này là tự nguyện và anh/chị có thể từ chối tham gia bất cứ lúc nào trong quá trình tiến hành cũng như có thể rút lại những thông tin đã cung cấp trước đó nếu như việc đó có thể gây nguy hiểm cho anh/chị và những người khác tham gia vào nghiên cứu này.
Những câu trả lời của anh/chị sẽ được để ở dạng ẩn danh và bảo mật trong nghiên cứu này cũng như các sản phẩm có liên quan. Tất cả thông tin thu thập được sẽ được tổng hợp và phân trả lời của anh/chị sẽ không được sử dụng bên ngoài mục đích nghiên cứu này. Chỉ có số liệu đã được tổng hợp, mã hóa sẽ được công bố trong các báo cáo nghiên cứu.

THÁM TRA ĐẠO DỨC VÀ CÁC PHẦN NÀN

Nghiên cứu này đã được xem xét, phê duyệt bởi Ủy ban Đạo đức Nghiên cứu về con người của trường Đại học RMIT. Nếu anh/chị có bất kỳ câu hỏi liên quan đến sự ẩn nghiên cứu này, xin vui lòng liên hệ với Tiến sĩ Peter Burke, thư ký Ủy ban Đạo đức Nghiên cứu về con người của Đại học RMIT qua điện thoại (+613) 9925 2251, hoặc email: peter.burke@rmit.edu.au.

Để biết thêm thông tin, anh/chị có thể liên hệ trực tiếp với nghiên cứu viên Lê Quang Toàn (xem chi tiết liên lạc ở trên).

Xin chân thành cảm ơn sự công tác của bạn!
THE PEOPLE’S POLICE ACADEMY OF VIETNAM
Address: Co Nhue Ward, Tu Liem District, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Tel/Fax: +84 4 37523913; Email: ppa@hvesnd.edu.vn; Web: www.hvesnd.edu.vn

Hanoi, 2nd June, 2014

RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee
RMIT University
Melbourne
Victoria
Australia.

Dear Sir or Madam,

The People’s Police Academy - Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam would like to confirm that we strongly support Mr. Quang Toan Le, PhD Candidate of RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia in doing his research on the topic “A study of the life histories of young offenders in Vietnam in the context of government policies and practices”.

We are pleased to support Mr. Quang Toan Le to collect data in Vietnam for his research. As the host organization of the PhD candidate, we will write a supporting letter to introduce him so that he will be able to contact relevant authorities, including, but not limited to, the General Department on Executing Criminal Punishment and Justice Support - Ministry Public Security (and selected prisons); Hanoi Public Security department; Ministry of Justice; and Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Vietnam for collecting secondary data and conducting interviews as well.

Yours sincerely,

PolLt.Gen. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Xuan Yen
President
The People’s Police Academy
Appendix 4.2. Official Letter of the People’s Police Academy to
The General Department of Executing Criminal Punishment and
Justice Support

BỘ CỘNG AN
HỌC VIÊN CẢNH SÁT NHÂN DÂN

Số: 301 / T32-HTQT
V/v Hỗ trợ giảng viên Học viện thực hiện
luận án tiến sĩ tại Liên Bang Úc

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Hà Nội, ngày 12 tháng 9 năm 2014

Kính gửi: Lãnh đạo Tổng cục thi hành án hình sự và hồ sơ tư pháp

Căn cứ Quyết định số 1346/QĐ-BCA 26 tháng 12 năm 2012 của Bộ trưởng
Bộ Công an, Học viện Cảnh sát nhân dân đã cử đồng chí Đội ụy Lê Quang Toản,
giảng viên Khoa nghiệp vụ Cảnh sát điều tra - Học viện Cảnh sát nhân dân đi học
tập, nghiên cứu hệ đào tạo Tiến sĩ tại Viện đại học Hoàng gia Melbourne, Australia
(RMIT University) với đề tài luận án: "Nghiên cứu lịch sử cuộc đổi đời của vị
thành niên phẩm tại trong một quốc hội với chính sách và thực tiễn ở Việt Nam".

Để hoàn thành đề tài luận án đồng chí Lê Quang Toản cần tiến hành khảo sát,
ghiên cứu và thu thập số liệu có liên quan tại một số Trại giam thuộc Tổng
cục thi hành án hình sự và hồ sơ tư pháp.

Trên cơ sở đó, Học viện Cảnh sát nhân dân trân trọng giới thiệu và kính đề
nghi Lãnh đạo Tổng cục thi hành án hình sự và hồ sơ tư pháp tạo điều kiện cho
dồng chí Toản thực hiện đề tài nghiên.

Kính mong các đồng chí quan tâm giải quyết./.

Người nhận:
- Như trên;
- Lưu: V.T.HTQT.

GIÁM ĐỐC

Trưởng phòng Nguyễn Xuân Yêm
APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Project Title: ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’

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APPENDIX 5.1: LIFE HISTORY DISCUSSION BRIEF FOR THE OFFENDERS CURRENTLY IN PRISON

(This schedule will be used as a framework for the interview)

Project title: Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach

Investigators:

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Prof. Desmond Cahill, co-investigator
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Toan Quang Le, Ph.D. candidate
Phone: (+61) 424742322
Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this research.

Your responses to this interview will be kept anonymous. I will code your personal details in the final research report and any publications to maintain your anonymity. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Date: ……………………………….. Time commenced: ………………………………..

1. Introduction

- What is your name? How old are you? Where was your place of residence?
- How long have you been in this prison? How long is your sentence?
- How is your life here (in the prison)? Do you have any difficulty or issues with the life here?
2. *Circumstance of birth and family of origin*

- Do you remember anything about your first year of life? What is your earliest memory?
- How would you describe your parents?
  - Where do they live? What are their occupations?
  - How would you describe your mother’s personality and emotional qualities?
  - How would you describe your father’s?
  - What feelings come up when you recall your parents?

3. *Early childhood*

- Where were you brought up? What was the area of your residence? How would you describe your home and your neighbourhood? Did you experience family moves?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters? How would you describe them? What do you like most or least about them? How was your relationship with them?
- Looking back on your childhood, is there anything you would have changed? How would you like it to have changed?
- Were you ever badly treated (physical/sexual/mental/emotional)?

4. *Culture setting and traditions*

- What is the ethnic or culture background of your parents?
- What family or culture celebrations, traditions, or rituals were important in your life?
- What beliefs or ideals do you think your parents tried to teach you?
- Was religion important in your family?

5. *Emotional/personal problems*

- Do you have any issues related to mental, medical and physical health, such as sleep problems/worry/fatigue/depression/irritability or do you feel that you have (present or past) emotional or mental health problems? How do these problems affect your life?
- Do you have any problem in concentrating in working or doing things?
- Do you dare to do dangerous things or take risks?

6. *Schooling and education*

- Did you attend school? What do you remember most about your school? Which grade have you finished? How was the result of your study at school?
- Was school important to you? What was your best memory of school?
- Have you ever experienced school violence or victimization?
- What is your view of the role of school and education in a person’s life?
7. Social factors

- How were you influenced by your family?
  - Did you get along with your family members?
  - What are the roles of your parents in your life? How do they influence you? In what way?
  - How was discipline handled in your family? How did your parents supervise you?
  - Were any of your parents involved with criminal activities, substance misuse or violence? Have you been abused, maltreated or neglected by your parents? Were there any problems with your family (unemployment; broken home; divorce; single-parent family; family conflict; domestic violence…)?
  - Have you ever run away from home?

- How were you influenced by your friends?
  - Did you have any close friends? Do you think that they influenced you and your behaviours?
  - Have any of your friends committed offence or antisocial behaviours?
  - Were you affected by any peers in committing offence?

- Did you join other social activities?
  - Did you play any sports or take part in other recreation activities?
  - What did you do for fun or entertainment (Internet, social networks, computer games)?
  - Have you been exposed to violent or pornographic media, games and other materials from the Internet, television or other sources?

- Who was the most important person in your life?

8. Critical times or incidents during the life

- What are you proudest of in your life? What would you say were the most significant events in your life up to now?
- What are the happiest moments in your life? What was your saddest time in your life?
- What were some of your struggles as a child?
- What was the hardest thing you’ve ever had to do?
- Looking back on your life, what do you regret?

9. Offending history

- Did you get into trouble much as a child and/or teenager?
Have you ever been convicted of a crime before? When was the first time of conviction? What kind of offence did you commit? How did it happen? How old were you when first convicted?

How many times have you been punished and sent to prison or national reform schools (correctional institutions for the juvenile delinquents who are not criminals)?

10. Youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders

How was your life in the prison?

How do other people you met in prison influence you?

Do you think that being in prison will help you avoid offending in the future?

Have you experience any disadvantages from the prison environment? How do these issues influence you and your rehabilitation?

From your experience, how do you evaluate the effectiveness of offender punishment and rehabilitation in the prison?

What other things do you think should be included to improve the quality of rehabilitation programs?

If I need to clarify any points, do you mind if I get back to you?

Thank you very much for your participation in this interview!
APPENDIX 5.2. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE PUBLIC OFFICERS
(This schedule will be used as a framework for the interview)

Project title: Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach

Investigators:

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Prof. Desmond Cahill, co-investigator  Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+613) 99254981

Toan Quang Le, Ph.D. candidate  Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+61) 424742322

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this research.

Your responses to this interview will be kept anonymous. I will code your personal details in the final research report and any publications to maintain your anonymity. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Date: ……………………………….. Time commenced: …………………………………

1. General information

- Which organisation/department are you working for?
- How many years of working experience in this organisation?
- What is your current position in this organisation?
- How long have you been in this position?
- What is your responsible for this position?

2. Information about youth offending

- How do you evaluate the situation of youth offending in Vietnam?
- What area related to youth offending that you are most experienced?
- What are the most significant reasons of youth offending?
- How effective are the intervention program for youth offending prevention?
Can you name the policies and programs related to youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders in your area or you know?

3. The risk factors for youth offending

From your experience of working in the area related to youth offending prevention and rehabilitation, please name and evaluate the significance of the risk factors for youth offending in others domains:

3.1. Individual risk factors

- What are the individual risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam?
- How do these factors affect youth offending?
- What are the most significant individual risk factors for youth offending?
- What had been done to reduce the effects of these factors on youth offending?

3.2. Family risk factors

- How do you evaluate the roles of family in the development of children and youth offending?
- What are the problems of family, which may affect youth development and youth offending?
- What are the family risk factors for youth offending in Vietnam?
- How do these factors affect youth offending?
- What are the most significant family risk factors for youth offending?
- What had been done to reduce the effects of these factors on youth offending?

3.3. School risk factors

- What is the importance of schools in the development of young people and preventing youth offending?
- What are the issues from school, which may influence youth offending?
- What are the risk factors for youth offending in school domain?
- How do these factors affect youth offending?
- What had been done to reduce the effects of these factors on youth offending?

3.4. Peer-related risk factors

- What are the issues related to peers, which influence youth offending?
- How do these factors affect youth offending?
- What had been done to reduce the effects of these factors on youth offending?

3.5. Community risk factors
How can community influence youth offending?

What are the risk factors for youth offending in the community domain?

How do these factors affect youth offending?

What had been done to reduce the effects of these factors on youth offending?

4. Youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders

How do you evaluate the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders?

How are identified risk factors youth offending targeted and intervened in policies and practices?

What do you think about punishment of youth crime in Vietnam? Is it effective in crime prevention?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of sending young offenders to prison?

What are prevention programs of youth offending? How effective are they?

What are rehabilitation programs for youth offending?

How do prevention and rehabilitation programs aim at reducing the risk factors for youth offending?

What are issues should be focused to improve the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders?

Do you have any further suggestions to improve the effectiveness of youth offending prevention and the rehabilitation of young offenders in Vietnam? If so, please specify.

Thank you very much for your participation in this interview!
PHỤ LỤC 5.1: DỰ KIẾN CẦU HỎI PHÒNG VÀN PHẠM NHÂN

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đời’

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Cảm ơn anh đã dành thời gian tham gia nghiên cứu này. Tất cả câu trả lời của anh sẽ được đảm bảo tuyệt đối bí mật. Tôi sẽ mấu hoài tất cả thông tin cá nhân của anh trong bản luận án cuối cùng cũng như tất cả những tài liệu khác để đảm bảo sự bí mật thông tin cá nhân. Xin chân thành cảm ơn sự hợp tác của anh.

Ngày: .................................................. Thời gian thực hiện: ........................................

1. Giới thiệu

- Tên của anh là gì? Anh bao nhiêu tuổi? Anh cử trú ở đâu trước khi phạm tội?
- Anh vào trại bao lâu rồi? Án phát của anh là bao nhiêu năm?
- Cuộc sống của anh ở đây thế nào? Anh có gặp khó khăn gì trong quá trình cải tạo ở đây không? Ví dụ?

2. Bối cảnh ra đời và nguồn gốc gia đình

- Kì ức đầu tiên của anh về cuộc sống là gì?
- Hãy miêu tả về bố mẹ anh?
  - Họ sống ở đâu? Nghề nghiệp của họ là gì?
  - Anh hay mơ thấy bố mẹ không?

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Anh hãy mở tả về đặc điểm, tính cách của cha anh cũng như cảm nhận của anh về bố của anh?

Việc nhắc đến cha mẹ có gọi cho anh cảm xúc gì không?

3. Những năm đầu đời

- Anh sinh ra và lớn lên ở đâu? Khu vực cư trú của anh có đặc điểm gì? Anh hãy mở tả về nơi ở của gia đình và hàng xóm của anh? Từ trước đến nay anh và gia đình có đi chuyển nơi cư trú không?
- Nhìn lại thời thơ ấu của anh, có bất cứ điều gì anh muốn có thể thay đổi đời không? Anh muốn nó thay đổi như thế nào?
- Anh có bao giờ bị đối xử tệ, ngược dại (thế chất / tinh dục / tinh thần / tinh cảm) không?

4. Các yếu tố về truyền thống văn hóa

- Cha mẹ anh có đặc điểm riêng gì về dân tộc hay văn hóa không?
- Các nghi lễ, lễ hội truyền thống nào mà anh cho là quan trọng?
- Bố mẹ anh có theo đạo hay tin theo một tôn giáo nào không? Theo anh thì bố mẹ anh có giống day anh về những niềm tin đó không?
- Các yếu tố thuộc về tôn giáo có quan trọng trong gia đình anh không?

5. Vấn đề về tình cảm / cá nhân

- Anh có bất kỳ vấn đề nào liên quan đến sức khỏe về bệnh lý, tâm thần và thế chất, chẳng hạn như mất ngủ / lo lắng / mệt mỏi / trầm cảm / khó chịu / hoặc anh có cảm thấy như thế? Những vấn đề này anh hướng đến cuộc sống của anh như thế nào?
- Anh có bất cứ vấn đề trong việc tập trung khi học tập hoặc làm việc không? Cụ thể?
- Anh có dấm bầm những việc nguy hiểm hay rủi ro cao không (tức là có liều khổng)?

6. Các vấn đề liên quan đến trường học và giáo dục

- Anh có đi học không? Bao nhiêu tuổi anh bắt đầu đi học? Điều gì làm anh nhớ nhất về trường học của anh? Anh học hết lớp mấy? Anh bao nhiêu tuổi anh khi anh rời khỏi trường học?
- Kết quả học tập của anh ở trường khi còn đi học thế nào?
7. Các yêu tố xã hội

- Trường học có quan trọng với anh không?
- Anh có chứng kiến hoặc tham gia bảo vệ học đường như đánh nhau, tụ tập bắt nạt các học sinh khác hoặc bị các nhóm học sinh khác bắt nạt, de dọa không?
- Theo suy nghi của anh thì vai trò của nhà trường và giáo dục trong cuộc sống của một người như thế nào?

7. Các yếu tố xã hội

- Mục độ ảnh hưởng của gia đình đối với anh như thế nào?
  - Anh có hòa hợp với các thành viên trong gia đình của anh không?
  - vai trò của cha mẹ trong cuộc sống của anh như thế nào? Họ ảnh hưởng đến anh như thế nào và bằng cách nào?
  - Cha mẹ anh duy trì kỷ luật trong gia đình như thế nào?
  - Cha mẹ anh có giám sát được anh như di đâu, làm gì, chơi với ai… không? Bằng cách nào?
  - Cha mẹ của anh có ai liên quan đến hoạt động tội phạm, làm dụng chất gây nghiện hoặc bảo lục không? Anh có bị làm dụng, nguyền đại hoặc bị bỏ rơi bởi cha mẹ của anh không?
  - Có bất kỳ vấn đề gì khác với gia đình của anh?
  - Anh đã bao giờ bỏ nhà ra đi chưa? Khi nào và tại sao?

- Anh có bị ảnh hưởng bởi bạn bè của anh của anh không? Như thế nào?
  - Anh có người bạn thân nào không? Thân đến mức nào? Anh có nghĩ rằng họ ảnh hưởng đến anh và hành vi của anh không? Anh hưởng như thế nào?
  - Các bạn bè của anh có ai phạm tội hoặc có các hành vi vi phạm pháp luật khác không? Anh nghĩ gì về điều đó?
  - Theo anh, việc ảnh phạm tội liệu có phản do tác động, ảnh hưởng từ bạn bè không?
  - Anh có tham gia một nhóm bạn hoặc các nhóm có cùng một số thích nào đó không? Nhóm đó như thế nào? Anh cảm thấy việc tham gia nhóm đó có giúp gì cho anh không? Và liệu nhóm đó có ảnh hưởng đến hành vi phạm tội của anh không?

- Anh có tham gia các hoạt động xã hội khác không?
  - Anh có chơi món thể nào tham gia các hoạt động vui chơi giải trí khác?
  - Anh đã làm gì để vui chơi, giải trí (Internet, mạng xã hội, trò chơi điện tử, game online)? Anh có thường xuyên tham gia các hoạt động này?
➢ Anh có từng dựa tiếp xúc với những hình ảnh có liên quan đến bạo lực hoặc khiêu dâm (sex) phương tiện truyền thông, trò chơi và trang web khác từ Internet, truyền hình hoặc các nguồn khác không?

➢ Ai là người quan trọng nhất trong cuộc sống của anh trước khi anh phạm tội? Đến thời điểm này họ còn quan trọng với anh không? Nếu không thì người quan trọng nhất với anh hiện tại là ai?

8. Thời điểm quan trọng và sự cố trong cuộc sống

➢ Điều gì làm anh tự hào nhất trong cuộc sống của anh? Những sự kiện nào quan trọng nhất và anh hưởng lớn nhất trong cuộc đời anh?

➢ Những khoảng khắc hành phúc nhất trong cuộc đời của anh là gì? Thời gian buồn nhất trong cuộc sống của anh là khi nào?

➢ Những khốn khổ lớn nhất anh từng phải trải qua trong thời thơ ấu?

➢ Điều khó khăn nhất anh đã từng làm là gì? Làm thế nào để anh vượt qua được?

➢ Nhìn lại cuộc sống của anh cho đến nay, những điều gì làm anh hồi ức nhất? Tại sao anh lại hồi ức?

9. Lịch sử liên quan đến hành vi phạm tội

➢ Anh có gặp rắc rối nhiều khi còn là một đứa trẻ không?

➢ Trước đây anh đã bao giờ phạm tội và bị kết án chưa? Lần đầu tiên phạm tội là khi nào? Những loại hành vi phạm tội anh phạm? Vụ việc đó đã xảy ra như thế nào? Anh phạm tội lần đầu tiên lúc bao nhiêu tuổi?

➢ Đã bao nhiêu lần anh bị đưa vào cá tấu tại trại giam hoặc trường giáo dưỡng?

10. Phong cảnh tội phạm và giáo dục cá tấu

➢ Anh nghĩ về cuộc sống trong trại giam như thế nào?

➢ Anh đánh giá như thế nào về những người anh gặp ở trong trại?

➢ Những người anh gặp trong trại có anh hưởng đến anh không? Như thế nào?

➢ Anh có nghĩ rằng việc cá tấu trong trại giam sẽ giúp anh không phạm tội trong tương lai không?

➢ Anh có gặp nhiều khó khăn về cuộc sống và cá tấu khi ở trong trại không? Những vấn đề này ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến anh? Những vấn đề đó đã được giải quyết như thế nào?

➢ Các hoạt động giáo dục, cá tấu anh được tham gia trong trại (hoc văn hoá, dạy nghề, lao động…)?
Các thành viên gia đình của anh có đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc cải tạo của anh không? Họ có thường xuyên tham gặp, hỗ trợ và đồng viên anh không?

Từ kinh nghiệm của anh, anh đánh giá thế nào về hiệu quả của công tác giáo dục cải tạo phạm nhân trong trại giam?

Theo anh có thể có thêm các hoạt động gì trong trại giam để nâng cao hiệu quả giáo dục, cải tạo phạm nhân hơn nữa?

Chân thành cảm ơn anh đã tham gia nghiên cứu này!
PHỤ LỤC 5.2. DỤ KIỆN CÀU HỎI PHÒNG VÂN CÁN BỘ

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn tới hành vi phạm tội của họ - Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đời’

Nghiên cứu viên:

Tên Sĩ Binoy Kampmark, nghiên cứu viên chính;

Điện thoại: (+613) 99252174; Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au

Giáo sư Desmond Cahill, tham gia nghiên cứu;

Điện thoại: (+613) 99254981; Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au

Lê Quang Toàn, Nghiên cứu sinh;

Điện thoại: (+61) 424742322; Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au

Cảm ơn anh đã dành thời gian tham gia nghiên cứu này. Tất cả câu trả lời của anh sẽ được đảm bảo tuyệt đối bí mật. Tôi sẽ mâu thuẫn thông tin cá nhân của anh trong bản luận án cuối cùng cũng như tất cả những tài liệu khác để đảm bảo sự bảo mật thông tin cá nhân. Xin chân thành cảm ơn sự hợp tác của anh.

Ngày: .................................................. Thời gian thực hiện: ...........................................

1. Thông tin chung

- Anh/chị công tác ở đơn vị nào?
- Anh/chị đã có kinh nghiệm làm việc trong lĩnh vực/đơn vị này được bao nhiêu năm rồi?
- Vị trí công tác anh/chị hiện đang nắm giữ trong đơn vị của mình?
- Anh/chị đã giữ vị trí công tác đó được bao nhiêu lâu rồi?
- Trách nhiệm chính của anh/chị ở vị trí công tác đó là gì?

2. Dánh giá về tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội

- Anh/chị đánh giá thế nào về tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam hiện nay?
- Anh/chị có kinh nghiệm nhất trong lĩnh vực nào có liên quan đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội.
Theo anh/chị thì những yếu tố nào là nguyên nhân quan trọng nhất dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị các chương trình phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội có hiệu quả không?

Anh/chị biết có những chương trình nào liên quan đến phòng ngừa và giáo dục cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

3. Những yếu tố nguy cơ có thể dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội

Bằng kinh nghiệm công tác thực tế tiến liên quan đến phòng ngừa, giáo dục cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội, anh/chị chỉ hãy nêu tên và đánh giá mức độ quan trọng của các yếu tố có nguy cơ dẫn đến hành vi phạm tội của thanh thiếu niên.

3.1. Những yếu tố cá nhân

Theo anh/chị những yếu tố nào thuộc về cá nhân có thể dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam?

Những yếu tố nào ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị, trong các yếu tố đó, những yếu tố nào là quan trọng nhất ảnh hưởng đến việc người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị thì những biện pháp nào đã được áp dụng ở nước ta để hạn chế ảnh hưởng của những yếu tố đó?

3.2. Những yếu tố gia đình

Anh/chị đánh giá thế nào về vai trò của gia đình đối với sự phát triển của con cái cũng như đối với việc người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị thì những yếu tố nào thuộc về gia đình có nguy cơ dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam?

Những yếu tố nào ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị trong các yếu tố đó, những yếu tố nào có vai trò quan trọng nhất dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị, những biện pháp nào đã được áp dụng để giảm tác hại của các yếu tố đó đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội.

3.3. Các yếu tố thuộc về giáo dục và trường học

Anh/chị đánh giá thế nào về tầm quan trọng của trường học đối với sự phát triển của thanh thiếu niên và phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội?
Theo anh/chị, những yếu tố nào liên quan đến trường học có thể ảnh hưởng và có nguy cơ dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Những yếu tố đó ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến tình trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị trong các yếu tố đó thì những yếu tố nào là quan trọng nhất?

Theo anh/chị biết thì có những chương trình, hành động cụ thể nào đã được áp dụng để giảm ảnh hưởng của các yếu tố đó đối với việc người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

3.4. Các yếu tố có liên quan đến bản bè

Theo anh/chị, việc người chưa thành niên phạm tội có chịu ảnh hưởng từ bản bè không?

Những yếu tố đó ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến tính trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị biết thì có những chương trình, hành động cụ thể nào đã được áp dụng để giảm tác hại của các yếu tố đó (?)

3.5. Các yếu tố thuộc về xã hội, cộng đồng

Theo anh/chị các yếu tố khác thuộc về xã hội, cộng đồng có ảnh hưởng và có nguy cơ dẫn đến người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Những yếu tố đó ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến tính trạng người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị biết thì có những chương trình, hành động cụ thể nào đã được áp dụng để giảm tác hại của các yếu tố đó (?)

4. Phòng ngừa tội phạm và giáo dục cải tạo người chưa thành niên phạm tội

Theo anh/chị biết thì có những chương trình phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo và tái hòa nhập cộng đồng cho người chưa thành niên phạm tội nào đã được áp dụng? Anh/chị có thể nói tên và nội dung tóm tắt của các chương trình đó?

Anh/chị đánh giá thế nào về hiệu quả của các chương trình phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Anh/chị đánh giá thế nào về hiệu quả của các chương trình giáo dục, cải tạo và tái hòa nhập cộng đồng cho người chưa thành niên phạm tội?

Theo anh/chị, các chương trình, chính sách về phòng ngừa, giáo dục, cải tạo và tái hòa nhập cộng đồng cho người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam đã tập trung giải quyết được các yếu tố nguy cơ (thuộc về cá nhân, gia đình, nhà trường, bạn bè, cộng đồng) chưa?

Anh/chị đánh giá thế nào về hình phạt từ đối với người chưa thành niên phạm tội? Theo anh/chị hình phạt từ có tác dụng trong việc ngăn chặn người chưa thành niên phạm tội cũng như tái phạm trong tương lai không?
Theo anh/chị, việc đưa thanh thiếu niên vào cải tạo tại các trại giam có những ưu điểm (thuần lợi) và nhược điểm (khó khăn) gì?

Theo anh/chị, để nâng cao hiệu quả phòng ngừa người chưa thành niên phạm tội, những vấn đề nào cần được chú ý tập trung hơn nữa?

Theo anh/chị, để nâng cao hiệu quả giáo dục, cải tạo và tái hòa nhập cộng đồng cho người chưa thành niên phạm tội, những vấn đề nào cần được chú ý tập trung hơn nữa?

Anh/chị có gợi ý nào khác để nâng cao hiệu quả phòng ngừa, giáo dục cải, cải tạo và tái hòa cộng đồng cho người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam không? Nếu có, anh/chị có thể nêu cụ thể?

Chân thành cảm ơn anh/chị đã tham gia nghiên cứu này!

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APPENDIX 6: LETTER OF APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH

BỘ CỘNG AN
TỔNG CỤC VIII

CONG HOÀ XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập – Tự do – Hạnh phúc

Số M75 /C81-C82

Hà Nội, ngày 13, tháng 6 năm 2014

Kính gửi:
- Học viên Cảnh sát nhân dân;

Cần cứ Công văn số 801/T32-HTQT ngày 02/6/2014 của Học viên Cảnh sát nhân dân về đề nghị cho đồng chí Đại úy Lê Quang Toản, giảng viên Khoa nghiệp vụ Cảnh sát điều tra – Học viện Cảnh sát nhân dân đăng di học tập, nghiên cứu hệ đào tạo Tiến sĩ tại Viện Đại học Hoàng gia Melbourne, Australia (RMIT University) với đề tài luận án: “Nghiên cứu lịch sử cửu đại đội của vị thanh niên phạm tội trong mối quan hệ với chính sách và thực tiễn ở Việt Nam”, được đi thực tế tại 04 trải giải: Phú Sơn 4, Suối Hai, Tân Lập, Thanh Xuân.

Tổng Cục VIII có ý kiến như sau:

1. Đồng ý đề đồng chí Đại úy Lê Quang Toản, giảng viên Khoa nghiệp vụ Cảnh sát điều tra – Học viện Cảnh sát nhân dân đăng di học tập, nghiên cứu hệ đào tạo Tiến sĩ tại Viện Đại học Hoàng gia Melbourne, Australia (RMIT University) được đến khảo sát, thu thập số liệu bằng các biện pháp phù hợp tại các trải giải trên thuộc Tổng cục VIII, Bộ Công an. Đồng chí Toản có trách nhiệm quản lý các tài liệu đã khảo sát, thu thập được tại các trải giải theo chỉ đạo Mật và các quy định khác của Nhà nước và Bộ Công an.

2. Giao trải giải Phú Sơn 4, Suối Hai, Tân Lập, Thanh Xuân tạo điều kiện thuận lợi khi đồng chí Đại úy Lê Quang Toản, giảng viên Khoa nghiệp vụ Cảnh sát điều tra – Học viện Cảnh sát nhân dân đến đơn vị khảo sát, thu thập số liệu phục vụ nghiên cứu đề tài luận án Tiến sĩ.

Tổng Cục VIII thông báo đề Học viên Cảnh sát nhân dân chỉ đạo đồng chí Toản phối hợp với các trải giải Phú Sơn 4, Suối Hai, Tân Lập, Thanh Xuân thực hiện.

Nơi nhận:
- Như trên;
- Các đ/c LBTC (để báo cáo);
- Lưu: VT, C82(P1).

TL: TỔNG CỤC TRƯỞNG
CỤC TRƯỞNG C82

Thiếu tướng Phạm Quốc Huỳnh

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PHỤ LỤC 6: CHẤP NHẬN CHO PHÉP THỰC HIỆN ĐỀ TÀI NGHIÊN CỨU

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY
GENERAL DEPARTMENT VIII
No. 1175/C81-C82

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence – Freedom – Happiness

Hanoi, June 13th 2014

To: - The People's Police Academy;
- The Guard of prisons: Phu Son 4, Tan Lap, Suoi Hai, Thanh Xuan.

Pursuant to Letter No. 801/T32-HTQT dated 02/6/2014 by the People's Police Academy allowing captain Le Quang Toan, Lecturer at Faculty of Police Investigation Profession - the People's Police Academy to attend the doctoral training course at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia (RMIT University) with the thesis: "Research on the life history of offence juvenile in relation to the policy and practice in Vietnam", and to take a visit to 04 prisons: Phu Son 4, Suoi Hai, Tan Lap, Thanh Xuan.

General Department VIII has following opinions:

1. Allow the captain Le Quang Toan, Lecturer at Faculty of Police Investigation Profession - the People's Police Academy upon his attendance in the doctoral training course at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia (RMIT University) to survey and collect data using appropriate measures at aforementioned prisons under General Department VIII, Ministry of Public Security. Mr. Toan is responsible for managing documents and papers investigated and collected at prisons according to the regulation on confidentiality and other regulations of the State and the Ministry of Public Security.

2. Prisons Phu Son 4, Suoi Hai, Tan Lap, Thanh Xuan should create favorable conditions for the captain Le Quang Toan, Lecturer at Faculty of Police Investigation Profession - the People's Police Academy to visit and collect data for purpose of his doctoral thesis

This is acknowledged by General Department VIII so the People's Police Academy directs Mr. Toan to cooperate with Prisons Phu Son 4, Suoi Hai, Tan Lap, Thanh Xuan in implementation

Recipient
- As above
- The Seniors (for report)
- File Doc., C82 (P1)

BY ORDER OF GENERAL DIRECTOR
C82 DIRECTOR
Major-General Pham Quoc Huynh
Signed and sealed

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This is to certify that Ms. Luu Thi Diep, ID No. 173393722 issued by Thanh Hoa Police on 04.12.2008, has signed in front of me at the Ba Dinh Justice Department, Hanoi City.

Chứng thực bà Lưu Thị Diệp, CMND số 173393722 do Công An Thanh Hóa cấp ngày 04.12.2008, đã ký trước mặt tôi
Số chứng thực: 1269, Quyền số: 02 SCT/CK.
Tại Quận Ba Đình - Ngày: 30/06/2014

Lưu Thị Diệp

I, the undersigned, Luu Thi Diep, ID card No. 173393722 issued on 04.12.2008 in Thanh Hoa, hereby undertake that the content of the attached Vietnamese document has been correctly and suitably translated by me.

Ngày 30 tháng 06 năm 2014
Người dịch

Lưu Thị Diệp
Kính gửi:
- Học viên Cánh sát nhân dân;


Tổng cục VIII có ý kiến như sau:

1. Đồng ý để đồng chí Đại ủy Lê Quang Toàn, giảng viên Khoa nghiệp vụ Cánh sát điều tra – Học viên Cánh sát nhân dân đang đi học tập, nghiên cứu heiß đào tạo Tiến sĩ tại Viện Đại học Hoàng gia Melbourne, Australia (RMIT University) được đến khảo sát, thu thập số liệu bằng các biện pháp phù hợp tại các trại giam trên thuộc Tổng cục VIII, Bộ Công an. Đồng chí Toàn có trách nhiệm quản lý các tài liệu đã khảo sát, thu thập được tại các trại giam theo chế độ Mật và các quy định khác của Nhà nước và Bộ Công an.


Tổng cục VIII thông báo đề Học viên Cánh sát nhân dân chỉ đạo đồng chí Toàn phối hợp với các trại giam Phú Sơn 4, Suối Hai, Tân Lập, Thanh Xuân thực hiện.

Nơi nhận:
- Như trên;
- Các đ/c LĐTC (để báo cáo);
- Lưu: VT, C82(P1).

Thiếu tướng Phạm Quốc Huỳnh

TL. TỔNG CỤC TRƯỞNG
CỤC TRƯỞNG C82

353
APPENDIX 7: ETHIC APPLICATION APPROVAL

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
Research and Innovation office
NH&MRC Code: EC00237

Notice of Approval

Date: 23 October 2014
Project number: 40/14
Project title: A study of the life histories of young male offenders in Vietnam in the context of government policy and practice
Risk classification: More than low risk
Chief investigator: Dr Binoy Kampmark

Approved: From: 23 October 2014 To: 31 March 2017

The above application has been approved by the RMIT University HREC as it meets the requirements of the National statement on ethical conduct in human research (NH&MRC, 2007).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by HREC. Approval is only valid whilst investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from HREC to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment use the request for amendment form, which is available on the HREC website and submitted to the HREC secretary. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from HREC.

3. Adverse events
   You should notify HREC immediately (within 24 hours) of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Plain Language Statement (PLS)
   The PLS and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PLS must contain a complaints clause including the above project number.

5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. Annual reports for each calendar year must be submitted by December 31 of each year from when the application is approved.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. HREC must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

9. Special conditions of approval
   Nil.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title above.

Prefs

A/Prof Barbara Polus
Chairperson
RMIT HREC

K:\R\Research Office\Governanace\RMIT Ethics\HREC\Applications database\2014\40-14 Kampmark40-14 kammark notice of approval.doc
Quang Toan Le, a researcher from RMIT University, Australia would like to come and talk to you about your life experience and how you came to be in prison.

Your participant is highly appreciated. If you would like to be involved, please let your supervisor know.

All contact is extremely confidential.
APPENDIX 9: CONSENT FORM

FOR COLLECTING AND USING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM PRISON FILES

Project Title: ‘Young incarcerated Vietnamese offenders and the risk factors in their offending: A life history approach’

Investigators:

Dr. Binoy Kampmark, chief investigator
Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+613) 99252174

Prof. Desmond Cahill, co-investigator
Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+613) 99254981

Toan Quang Le, Ph.D. candidate
Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au
Phone: (+61) 424742322

1. I have had the project explained to me and I have read the information sheet;

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described;

3. I agree that my court records and other personal information from the prison files will be collected and used for this research and the privacy of my personal information will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law;

Participant’s Consent

Participant: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Signature)

Witness:

Witness: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Signature)
GIÁY DỌNG Y
CHO PHÉP THU THẬP, SỬ DỤNG THÔNG TIN CÁ NHÂN TỪ HỒ SƠ TRẠI GIAM

Tên đề tài: ‘Người chưa thành niên phạm tội ở Việt Nam và những yếu tố nguy cơ dẫn đến hành vi phạm tội của họ: Một cách tiếp cận từ lịch sử cuộc đời’

Nghiên cứu viên:

Tiền Si Binoy Kampmark, nghiên cứu viên chính;

Diễn thoại: (+613) 99252174; Email: Binoy.Kampmark@rmit.edu.au

Giáo sư Desmond Cahill, tham gia nghiên cứu;

Diễn thoại: (+613) 99254981; Email: Des.Cahill@rmit.edu.au

Lê Quang Toàn, nghiên cứu sinh;

Diễn thoại: (+61) 424742322; Email: Quangtoan.Le@rmit.edu.au

1. Tôi đã được đọc thông tin về nghiên cứu này và được giải thích về dự án nghiên cứu;

2. Tôi đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu này với các nội dung như đã nêu trên;

3. Tôi đồng ý cho phép sử dụng bản án và các tài liệu cá nhân của tôi từ hồ sơ trại giam phục vụ nghiên cứu này, và tình riêng tư của những thông tin cá nhân sẽ được bảo vệ bí mật cùng như sẽ chỉ được cung cấp và sử dụng với sự đồng ý của tôi hoặc bất buốc theo quy định của pháp luật.

Người tham gia: ___________________________ Ngày: ___________________________

(Chữ ký)

Người chứng kiến: ___________________________ Ngày: ___________________________

(Chữ ký)
APPENDIX 10: SAMPLE CASE STUDIES

CASE 1: ANH

Poverty

Ethnic minority background

Parents worked far away from home

Inconsistent discipline, lack of supervision and parental involvement

Lack of internet management

Peer influence

School management

Pornography

Truancy

Lack of legal knowledge

Low self-control

Lack of empathy

RAPE A CHILD
CASE 1: ANH

Anh was the first son in a Muong (an ethnic minority) family in a Northern mountainous province of Vietnam. However, he could speak Vietnamese well, as he was using Vietnamese during nine years of going to school. His family lived in a ‘ban’ (a village), which was close to the centre of the district. Therefore, the infrastructure in the area was more developed than in other parts of the district. The living standard was also higher than in other areas of the province. He admitted that there were not only people of Muong ethnicity but also people from other ethnicity groups, including the Kinh ethnicity (the majority in Vietnam, whose language is Vietnamese) who came and lived in his area. The population of the area was quite larger than in other parts of the province.

He was fluent in Vietnamese and he could understand, read and write the language well. He could also speak the Muong language, but he could not write it. However, when answering the questions, he usually avoided direct answers to the question but mentioned other information. He tended to be evasive in his responses. However, when being asked questions not relevant to his criminal activities, he seemed to be much more confident when answering.

He was over eighteen years old at the time of the interview, but he looked much younger than his age. He was just like a schoolboy with light skin, who was short, thin and shy at the meeting. It was more surprising when he admitted that he had been incarcerated for three years for the crime of raping a child. He was convicted at the age of just over fifteen years old when he was still a student in grade nine.

There were two children in his family. His brother was ten years younger than himself. He admitted that his parents were destitute and they had to work very hard to take care of the family. That was the reason they only had their second son long after the first son. Anh admitted that when he was about three years old, his parents usually went to work far from his hometown and he had to stay with his grandmother most of the time. His parents did not take much care of him, although they sometimes returned to visit him. His parents only came back to work near his area when he started school at the age of six. However, after having the second son, there were more economic pressures on the family, so his parents again had to go to further areas for working. During that time, he handled taking care of his younger brother. He admitted that his parents were too busy with working for earning money for the small family, leaving the two kids home alone for most of the time. Lacking supervision, he was
involved with games and the internet, especially pornography. He usually accessed the internet and played online games. It was easy for him to access the internet, as one of his neighbours was an internet agency. With the curiosity of his age, he usually accessed adult websites and he was significantly affected by these pornographic materials. One day, when his parents went out in the evening, asking him to stay at home, studying and taking care of his younger brother. When they left, a 4-year-old neighbour child came to his house to play with his little brother. She was his brother’s close friend and she went to his family almost every day. He turned on the TV for them to watch and then opened his notebooks to do his homework. However, he could not concentrate when thinking of the porn he watched in the afternoon. When his brother asked him to go to the kitchen to take him some water, the small girl followed him into the kitchen. Being obsessed by the sexual scenes from the porn videos and failing to control himself, he immediately took the girl to corner of the kitchen and raped her.

‘I was watching porn videos right before coming home that afternoon. I felt very stressed and uncomfortable when I could not push the sexual scenes out of my mind. I felt that there was something inside me, which strongly encouraged me to rape her. Then I could not control myself.’

The girl’s parents reported the case to the police the next morning and Anh was arrested. He was then prosecuted and punished with a 6-year sentence for the crime of child rape. After three years in prison, his sentence had been reduced once by six months and his prison term would finish in about two years, though his punishment could be shortened more, as well.

Three years in jail did not make him more confident and he was still quite hesitant at the beginning of the interview. After that, he became more open when talking about his life experiences. However, this was one of the cases, in which the participant seemed to take much care before answering the posed questions. When being asked about details of the case, he responded that he could not remember anything as a long time had passed. However, he recommended that the researcher could search for more information in his court judgment and his prisoner profile. From the information collected, some risk factors for his offending had been identified. It seemed that the family risk factors and the influences of games and the internet played significant roles in his conviction.
Individual risk factors

- **Lack of legal awareness**

He admitted that he did not know that his activities were a crime and he just imitated the films he had watched on the internet. Therefore, when he met the girl, engaged in a form of conduct he had learned without knowing the consequences. He also admitted that no one had ever told him about the consequences of having sex with a small girl without her consent. The lack of legal awareness about the prohibited nature of such conduct was a significant risk factor behind the offence. He said that he did not know that he would be arrested because of what he had done.

- **Lack of self-control**

His lack of self-control was clearly shown when he was involved with pornography. He could feel the negative effects of watching pornography to his physical and mental health, but he could not solve the problems. He intended to stop watching these films several times, but he always failed to do that. He even admitted that he was afraid that he would commit rape one day when he could not control himself. However, he had not expected that it would happen with a neighbouring girl.

‘After being involved in pornography, I usually thought of having sex with them. I even sometimes dreamed about doing sexual intercourse with young and beautiful women. I was sometimes afraid that I would commit rape one day.’

His parents knew that he was involved with the internet and games, but they did not know his pornography involvement. His mother usually advised him to focus on study, not the internet and games. During the interview, he repeatedly stressed that poor self-control because of pornography was the biggest problem that led not only his incarceration but also the tragedy in his family. He admitted that not only him, but also his parents were ashamed because of his crime and they did not dare to face their neighbours and villagers. He felt pity for his parents and he regretted not following their guidance.

- **Lack of confidence**

His appearance showed that he lacked confidence, given that he was facing high pressure from other people because of committing the crime of rape against a child. He seemed to be
shy when meeting other people. He was afraid of being asked about his crime and his involvement in pornography. He did not usually answer the question directly as he might need time to think of the best responses. He was among several participants who refused to answer some questions. Though the researcher had previously explained that he could do that, his refusal of responding to these questions highlighted that he was not confident about himself.

When he was going to school, he was timid and isolated from most of the other students. He rarely joined others in social activities. It was not clear whether this was because of his separation from his parents when he was small or his academic failure (as he admitted). However, he was not confident joining other students in his class and school. The situation became more serious when he was involved in pornography.

In Vietnam, the rape offenders are incarcerated with the offenders who had committed other kinds of crimes. Anh admitted that he was in the same room with many other juvenile criminals, who committed various crimes. He admitted that he was among the special prisoners in the room as he raped a child. Other prisoners usually teased, isolated and looked down on him as child rapists are considered to have significant a moral and mental illness. When he reached eighteen years old, he was moved to the area adult prisoners in the same prison. Although he was still sometimes teased, he admitted that the circumstances were much better when he moved to the new place. However, the way he was treated by others might increase the pressures on him, which made him more lacking confidence.

- **Lack of sense of the future**

Being a sex offender, Anh did not see himself as having good prospects for rehabilitation. He also admitted that he could foresee his situation when he was released, as he would be isolated from his neighbours and villagers. He was the only participant in the study who acknowledged that did not believe that he would overcome the prison term to become a rehabilitated citizen. Most of the participants strongly believed that they could change their life after their prison term. Several others were not very sure, but they stated that they would try their best. However, Anh said that he could not say anything about the future, although he would like to return to his normal life. He admitted that he only saw difficulties and did not know how to overcome them. The lack of confidence about the future could be a significant factor, which placed him at a high risk of recidivism after his prison term.
Family risk factors

- **Separated from parents**

He said that his parents left him with his grandmother to go to work when he was three years old. He did not remember much about that period, as he was too small. However, he admitted that he could remember the feeling of loneliness when his grandmother was busy with working as well. He missed his parents, but they only visited him once a week and left the next day. He totally lacked care from his parents for several years and this could significantly affect his feelings and attitude. Although his parents then returned to work near their residence, they had to work harder when his younger brother was born. Therefore, they could not care much about him as well. A lack of parental involvement and general estrangement from a nurturing environment would encourage Anh’s involvement with peers and other forms of socialisation.

- **Low parental involvement**

He said that his parents did not care about his study results and they seemed to accept that their child was not intelligent enough to become a good student. Therefore, his parents never knew that he was too stressed studying, especially when going to the after-school class. Moreover, they never knew about the problems he faced at school, such as isolation from others or being bullied. He could never confide with his parents about any of his issues.

- **Poor parent-child relationship**

Because of the separation from his parents and the low parental involvement, he was not close to his parents. He admitted that he sympathised with his parents, as they had to work to feed the family. He said that he missed his parents much as he did not have a chance to hold them for years (when visited by his parents, he could only see them through a glass and talk to them on a telephone). He stressed that his parents were significant to him, as well. However, he admitted that he did not have many happy memories with his parents and they were not close to him. He also concluded that his parents wanted good things for him, but he did not follow their advice. However, he believed that his parents would be the most important to help him when he was released.
• *Inconsistent discipline*

The discipline in the family was lax. He admitted that both of his parents were gentle and kind to him. They loved him but treated him in an inconsistent way. He said that he was never beaten by his parents from the time he was born. This was extremely different from most of the participants in this study, as they were most corporally punished by their parents as a symbol of discipline in the family. However, this might be related to the lack of discipline in the family. Anh said that his parents only shouted at him when they were too angry, but that rarely happened. In most of the cases when he made mistakes, his parents only persuaded and advised him not to do that again. He admitted that he usually told lies to his parents, or went to the internet agency for playing games without asking for their permission. However, when finding him, his parents only complained about that and warned him to ask for their permission before going out. This was not efficient and he admitted that he was not afraid of his parents and he did not usually follow their advice.

‘When my mother came into the internet agency to look for me, she did not dare to shout at me because of the appearance of the neighbours [the internet agency was next to his house]. Therefore, she only gently told me to go home. I usually told her that I would finish the match in the games before going home, as I saw that she was not angry and she agreed. However, I always played for several hours after that, before I came home. My mother was busy with working in the garden so she did not call me again. When I returned home, she only gently advised not to spend too much time playing games and the internet. My father was always busy with working in a group of building labourers and he was not at home regularly. So, he did not know much about my involvement in games and the internet.’

He was spoiled by his parents and other family members. When being asked about money for paying for the internet fee, he admitted that he did not usually have breakfast so that he could save some money for paying the internet fee. He could also ask his grandparents for money when he needed. Moreover, his father usually gave him pocket money when he came back home. His father also advised him to focus on his study as well. However, his father would never check what Anh had done with the money he was given. He then spent all the money on the Internet and games. The lack of discipline from his parents might also be a significant factor for his involvement in the internet and offending after that.
• **Lack of supervision**

When he was small, he lived with his grandmother most of the time while his parents worked. Therefore, he was not well-supervised by his parents and the lack of supervision was a significant issue and one of the most important risk factors for his offending. Both of his parents were busy with working for earning money. He admitted that his mother was kind, but she was feeble, as she did not even dare to shout at him when he did something wrong. Therefore, he did not feel any pressure from her complaints and advice. His father’s supervision was even less as he was rarely at home. He usually left home early in the morning and returned late at night. He was sometimes away from home for weeks when his group worked in a distant area. He admitted that his parents did not know where he went and whom he joined. His mother only searched for him in the internet agency near his home, but she did not know what he was doing on the computer. He just explained that he was playing games and his mother believed it. They also gave him money to pay for after-school lessons when he asked, but they never checked the effectiveness of that.

• **Young parents and lack of parental skills**

His mother was 35 while his father was 37 years old at the time of the interview. It meant that they got married when his mother was only 16 years old and he was born when his mother was only 17 years old. His father was two years older than his mother, but both of them were young when they got married and such youthfulness dictated a certain environment, which did not witness much supervision. However, this is a culture in many minority ethnicities in Vietnam, including Muong communities. Therefore, they might lack experience and skills when getting married. Young parents had been identified as a risk factor for youth offending in previous studies. Moreover, this factor could be linked to various risk factors, such as lax discipline, lack of supervision or low parental involvement, which could multiply the risk for Anh’s offending.

He admitted that his parents’ social skills were not good as they did not have chances to finish school. Both of them could speak, read and write Vietnamese, but they had to leave school early to work. He admitted that his parents were rarely involved with other members of the community. Though they did not have any conflict with others, they did not have a close relationship to any of their neighbours.
School risk factors

- **Academic failure**

He admitted that during the time he went to school, his study results were poor. When he first went to school in grade one, his study was so bad that his father decided to stop working for several months to stay at home to help him study. Moreover, they also asked his teacher to arrange extra private and paid lessons for teaching him so that he could improve. Therefore, his study result was improved until he reached grade five. At that time, his parents did not care about his study like before as they believed that he could study by himself and they were busy as well.

- **Poor school ties**

He agreed that school was important to him, but he said that he was not close to his school. He repeated that he felt too tired to study much, given that he could not concentrate well. Being stressed by studying, but he still tried to go to school and he never left school or truanted before he was involved with games. However, he said that he did not want to go to school, as it was very boring and stressful. Moreover, he was engaged with games and the internet from grade five, so his study got worse each year until when he was arrested in grade nine. Besides, the problems of concentration in his study might also be a significant reason for his low performance in school. The academic failure might have increased other risk factors like truancy, low bonding to school and the high involvement with internet, games and pornography.

- **Truancy**

He started truanting at the end of grade five when he went to the internet agency with several friends. Then when he became more engaged with the internet, he truanted more. However, being afraid of being punished, he only dared to truant for several lessons, not the whole day. Thus, he was rarely detected and he did not have any serious problems with his truanting. Nevertheless, regular truanting did increase his academic failure and low school bonding. Moreover, it gave him more chances to be involved with the internet and pornography.

Peer risk factors

- **Peer influence**
He said that he had several close friends and they usually truanted and went to the internet agency together. He had three close friends who usually joined him when they had free time. They all had video players at home, so they sometimes rented videos tapes for watching together, which was outside adult supervision. As his parents were rarely at home, they never knew what he and his friends did at home. He admitted that they usually watch action films. He also admitted that they sometimes saw the sexual scenes in the movies they watched as well. He admitted that he knew the internet and various games through socialising with his peers. Also, his friends showed him pornography websites and let him watch porn movies.

He admitted that he was strongly influenced by his friends in his involvement with the internet, games and pornography. However, he said that the main reason for his offending was his failure to control himself and he could not blame his friends for that.

**Community risk factors**

- **Poverty**

His parents had to work hard and they even left the children home to work. This must be a significant problem for the child’s development and conviction, as it affected other risk factors, such as lack of supervision or low parent-child relationship. Anh was affected because of living away from his parents.

- **Influences of pornography**

The pornography might be blamed as the direct reason for his conviction. This case was similar to other cases, in which participants were influenced by the internet, games or violent media. However, the circumstance of Anh seemed to be more directed as he raped the little girl under the immediate effects of watching porn. However, it could be suggested that the long-term effects of watching pornography might significantly affect his mind, which increased the pressure and stress while decreasing his self-control.

He was always considered a well-behaved son until he was involved with internet and games. Although he still obeyed his parents, he sometimes went to the internet agency without asking them. As his parents were too busy to supervise him, he gradually became highly iengaged with pornography. With a headphone, he could easily watch porn videos without being detected by others.
‘At first, I just followed my friends to watch these videos because of the curiosity. However, after that, I was obsessed by the scenes I had watched and I always thought of them. There was something inside me, which continuously encouraged me watch these films again and again. I did not know why, but I could not share the problem with anyone. I was afraid that someone would detect that fact and I had tried to stay away from the internet agency. But it was too difficult. I am very ashamed of my crime. If I was not engaged in pornography, I would have been free to go to school like other students.’

It could be clearly seen that he was significantly affected by the pornography. Not only was he obsessive about the porn he watched, his attitude and behaviour had also been changed. He considered it the top secret that needed to be kept. He admitted that he was always afraid that his parents and other people would detect that he was pornography addicted. He became isolated from other people. He was less involved with others, even those friends who first let him watch pornography. Moreover, he always felt very stressed, worried and distracted after he was deeply involved with pornography. He then only thought of how to release the pressures in his body and his head. He also admitted that the involvement with pornography might have changed his outlook.

‘I did not know why I was attracted by her [a four-year-old girl]. Though I had sometimes thought of doing sexual intercourse with women, I never thought of having sex with a tiny girl. I think I was affected by the immediate effects of watching porn videos earlier that day.’

- Management of internet, games and other media

It seemed that there was no effort from the authorities to prevent children from being engaged with porn and other harmful material from the internet. Moreover, the management of other media was lax, as he admitted that he and his friends could rent video tapes easily though they were all juveniles. This might be a significant factor in not only this case but many other social issues in Vietnam as well.

He said that the owner of the internet agency did not care much about what the player did on the internet with the computer. Moreover, they never monitored the downloaded content. He admitted that the owners might ignore this, as they need more customers for income reasons. Therefore, it was easy for him to access the porn websites by choosing a computer in the
corners or at the back of the agencies. He also stressed that he could search for hundreds of porn websites by using Google search with only one click. Moreover, he said that the people around him did not care about what he was doing, as many of them were also focusing on pornography or games.

- **Disadvantages of juvenile incarceration**

  When he was in prison, he faced more serious problems of isolation, given that he was a child rapist. Although he did not directly say that he was isolated, he admitted that he was teased and regularly shouted at by others because of his crimes. Therefore, he had to ignore them so that he could avoid the conflict although he was furious. However, this might be a significant issue for him in not only his prison term but also after that. His conduct would be affected by such enforced isolation, given the specific status afforded sex crime offenders. He did not believe in his future when seeing how others people treated a rapist like him. Therefore, he might be at higher risk of reoffending after his prison term.

  Moreover, this case also pointed out the disadvantages of sending a juvenile to prison, where he was more severely affected by other prisoners. This might not help him with his rehabilitation but increase his likelihood of reoffending as well.

  Overall, it could be seen that Anh was affected by numerous of risk factors when convicted. Among them, the individual risk factors such as lack of legal awareness, lack of self-control, mental problems, lack of social skills and low self-confidence were among the most significant risk factors. Besides, the family-related risk factors like separation from parents, low parental involvement in his upbringing, poor parent-child relationship, inconsistent discipline and lack of supervision also played important parts in contributing to his offending. In terms of community risk factors, the involvement with the internet and pornography were the most direct risk factors behind his offending, given that the management of the internet was not effective. These risk factors might have relationships with others in contributing to his likelihood of offending.

  This case also showed the problems of juvenile incarceration, especially those who committed sexual crimes like those by Anh. Moreover, there was no separate prison for sexual-related crime offenders in Vietnam, posing a significant problem for these offenders in their rehabilitation. This lack of proper treatment might suggest high risks of recidivism after his prison term.
CASE 7: DUY

- Being abandoned
- Broken home
- Death of adopted parents
- Sent to a pagoda
- Criminal activities
- Lack of supervision and parental involvement
- Poverty
- Adverse peer influence
- School management
- Truancy
- Dropout of school
- Reform school
- Restlessness, Low self-control
- Games addicted
- Lack money
- THEFT
- School violence
- Poverty
- Adverse peer influence
- School management
- Truancy
- Dropout of school
- Reform school
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- THEFT
- School violence
Duy was born into very troublesome circumstances, whereby his father left his mother before he was born and he knew nothing about his father. After he was born, he lived with his mother in difficulty, given that his father never came back or took care of them. He could not remember what his mother did to earn a living at that time, but his family was destitute. When he was five years old, his mother gave him to a family in another province before going away without caring about him for many years. She took him on a train, pretending to go somewhere, then asked him to stay there and wait for her when she went to buy him some cakes. However, she never came back while his adopted parents had been arranged to pick him up.

‘I still clearly remembered the feeling of being abandoned by my mother. It was terrible when she never came back to pick me up, given that I was only a small child.’

His new family was quite well off although both his adopted parents were farmers. They had only one daughter and they could not have any more children. According to traditional thinking in Vietnamese families, especially in rural areas, having a son is crucial to the family and its lineage. Therefore, they wanted to have a son through adopting a child.

When he joined the family, his adopted parents treated him as if he was their real son. They loved him and tried to satisfy his needs. His life was much improved than when he was living with his mother. Moreover, their relatives, who lived in the same village, were also happy to welcome him to the family. As a five-year-old boy, he only missed his mother for several days before he forgot thinking about her. He was happy with the better life in the new family, in which there were ‘new parents’ who cared about him and spoiled him. He was sent to kindergarten soon after that, where he met many children of his age. However, he started to show that he was a stubborn child while he did not always obey his parents and the staff of the kindergarten. He fought with others regularly and the staff usually complained about him to his foster parents. However, they thought that he was only a small child, who did not understand the things he did. They just persuaded him not to do that again, but it happened repeatedly.

When he was six years old, he went to primary school, where he continued having problems with fighting with other students. However, as many pupils in the school were older than him, he did not fight regularly. He was engaged with several online violent games (e.g. Counter-
strike) when he was ten years old in grade 4, as an older boy in the village showed him how to play. By the time he was 11 years old, he was so heavily involved and he pondered ways of earning money to continue the gaming activities. He first spent all his money for breakfast for games and ate nothing before going to class in the morning. However, this amount of money was not enough for him to play games as well as buying food. Therefore, he monitored his foster parents to find the places where they hid the key. He then stole money from both his foster parents many times. Although his foster father tried to prevent him from taking the money by using harsh punishments with him, it seemed that this punishment did not work. At that time, he also stole small things from other families and sold them for money. He was arrested by the commune police several times, where he had to write reports about stealing property from others and promised not to do that again.

In the same year, his foster mother died of a stroke as she had a problem with blood pressure. His foster father died of lung cancer the next year when he was twelve years old, his family had to sell most of the property for his foster father’s treatment, but it did not work. As both of his foster parents had died and there was hardly anything in the family, he was sent to live in a pagoda in the same district while his sister was brought up by the relatives.

However, as he was highly engaged with online games, he continued stealing from other people and then dropped out of the school when he was in grade 7. After repeatedly stealing he was arrested by the commune police several more times before being sent to a reform school for delinquent children at the age of 13. He had to stay in the reform school for two years, the longest period for a child to be in a reform school. He said that he had to serve the longest term in the reform school as he usually broke the rules. However, as there were classes in the reform school, he continued studying and completed grade 8 before he finished his term in the reform school. During that time, his mother heard about him and went to the reform school to visit him and he met his mother again after ten years.

After getting out of the reform school, he went to Hanoi to work. However, he did not focus on his work but spent most of his time on games. He was joined by another young man and they spent most of their time in the internet agencies in Hanoi. When running out of money, they thought of stealing to fund their gaming habits. Duy was ‘experienced’ in stealing when he was in his hometown. Moreover, he had learnt special techniques for committing crimes from his fellow inmates in the reform school, which was significant evidence of adverse effects of sending children to a reform school. Several motorbike thefts and a burglary were
executed as a consequence. They were then both arrested when trying to steal a motorcycle at an internet agency. He was punished for the crime of theft and burglary and he had to serve a sentence of 6 years of incarceration. Duy was arrested when he was just over 16 years old. At the time of the interview, he was over 19 after three years in prison. His sentence had been reduced two times and he only had to serve his sentence for less than two more years. Moreover, he could have another chance to reduce the period of his prison term if he continued the proper process of rehabilitation.

When first talking to the researcher, he seemed not to concentrate on the content of the interview. However, after a short time, he became more engaged in the interview when talking about his family circumstances and his life experiences. During the interview, he proved reticent and sad: ‘Throughout my whole life, I never felt happy at all. Most of my life was covered with unhappiness and I could only remember the sad things’, he said.

In this case, numerous of risk factors related to individual, family, school, peers and community were identified.

**Individual risk factors**

- *Early age of first conviction*

He was involved in antisocial behaviour from the time his foster parents were still alive when he was about eleven years old. Though he had been called by the commune police several times, he never changed. When his foster parents died, he became deeply engaged in criminal activities, especially stealing from nearby families. As he repeatedly committed the same offence, he was sent to a reform school for delinquents, which was under the control of the police. The only reason he was not sent to a prison was that he was only thirteen years old, lower than the age of criminal responsibility in Vietnam.

- *Aggressive and violent behaviour*

Duy was aggressive and violent, especially at his school where he was high involved in fighting and violence. He fought with others regularly. In most of the time, he hit others and he was rarely beaten by other students in his school. The reason for his fighting varied, but he admitted that he easily got angry when being teased, or having conflict with others. Fighting
with others was usually his solution for the problems. He seemed to enjoy beating others from the time he was in kindergarten.

‘I was involved in fighting in kindergarten when I was five years old. My foster parents sent me to a kindergarten in the village, where I joined with many other kids. I fought others almost every day. When going to primary school, I also beat others regularly. I thought that I fought too much, but I did not know why and I never wondered about the reasons as well.’

- **Hyperactivity and lack of self-control**

It was clearly seen that there were numerous individual risk factors, which contributed to his offending later on. He also admitted that he committed crime mostly because of his high involvement with games and his indulgence in pleasures, but not because of the circumstance. He also mentioned that he had tried to change himself, but it was too difficult for him and then he gave up. However, he might not have realised that his circumstances had a strong effect on his character and behaviour, which then led to his offending. For example, he said that he did not like playing games at first. However, he could stay the whole day at the internet agency, just because he wanted to forget the unhappy things and events in his life. However, he was high involved with the internet after that, which directly led to his conviction.

- **Physical abuse**

When going to kindergarten, Duy was usually punished by the teachers with corporal punishment.

‘I was usually punished by the staff of the kindergarten. They usually hit me on my hands or bottom with bamboo rods or forced me to stand to face the wall for half an hour. But, these punishments did not prevent me from continuing to beat others. I then got familiar with bullying others.’

When moving to primary school, he continued to fight others. Though other students did not dare to attack him, in several cases, he was slapped and punched by the family members of other students after he hit them. He admitted that in those cases, he could not resist, as they were adults, while he was only a small pupil. He just stood until they stopped and left. After that, he continued beating others who had disagreements with him without fearing being
beaten again. Such a measure of risk-taking also influenced his behaviour and his involvement in delinquency and later offending. Besides, Duy was sometimes beaten by his foster father, especially when he stole the money from his parents or others.

- **Substance abuse**

Duy started smoking when he was in grade six. When his foster parents died and the relatives turn their faces against him, he felt sorry and he did not want to study anymore. Although they were not his parents, they had treated him like their real son and when both of them died, he felt lost. He spent his time on games and smoking to relieve his sadness. He smoked more regularly and he became nicotine addicted after that. When he was in prison, he did not have enough money for a cigarette, as his mother could not visit him regularly and she could only give her some money. However, he still could still buy rustic tobacco to smoke at the canteen, which was much cheaper than cigarettes. Though nicotine addicted might not have directly affected his involvement in offending, it might have increased the pressure on him, given that he needed much money for funding his habit of playing games as well.

- **Involvement in other antisocial and illegal activities**

Duy also seemed to have a problem with disruptive behaviour. Not only was he involved with fighting regularly, but he also enjoyed teasing and annoying other people, such as throwing crackers into others’ house before running. He was involved with other delinquent activities when he was very young, especially fighting with others or stealing things from others. He sometimes stole things from others for the fun of it.

‘The first time I stole things from others was when I was only eight years old. I was going with my friends when we saw a hen wandering near the edge of the road. We immediately caught and brought it to the field, collecting wood to set a fire and then grill it for eating. We were all very excited about stealing and eating the chicken although we were not hungry.’

He seemed to have a ‘habit’ of stealing things from others when he was only in grade six, including money and possessions from his family and the neighbours. He could not remember how many times he had been called or arrested by the commune police. However, at that time he was too small to be punished, so he was normally released the same day.
He was then forcefully sent to the reform school because of repeated stealing. That was also the reason he was later arrested and prosecuted for the crime of theft and burglary, given that he was highly involved with games and he needed money for that. This seemed to be a continuous process with different levels of his involvement in offending.

**Family risk factors**

Duy was one of the participants who experienced the most significant family issues in this study. There were numerous family risk factors, which might have strongly affected him and his involvement in offending.

- **Being neglected by parents**

  Duy was abandoned by both his parents. While his father left before he was born, his mother also left him when he was only five years old. Although his mother came back after ten years visiting him at the reform school, it seemed to be too late, as he did not feel any love or connection with her. He was seriously affected by the fact that he was abandoned by both parents. The effects of being left might lead to his negative thinking and behaviour, which then led to his offending though he always said that he did not retain hatred for his mother.

  ‘I did not blame my mother for leaving me, as she was too poor to take care of me at that time. But I did not feel any warmth from her when she visited me in the reform school. I did not know what to talk to her about as well.’

As both of his parents left him when he was too small, it was an unhappy experience which affected his life and activities. He was reluctant to mix with people, especially other students at his school. He isolated himself. He admitted that he usually thought much about his life, his family and himself as an adopted child when being teased, but he could not solve the problems.

  ‘I felt self-pity when looking at other students in my school, especially when I saw them with their parents and family. I found it tough to join them although most of them were kind to me. I could only join with several students who were in similar circumstances.’
• **Disrupted family**

He had experienced three notable personal disruptions in his family life. The first time was when he was born without knowing anything about his father. The second time was when his mother left him to his adopting family and the third time was when he was sent to live in the pagoda after his foster parents died. He was just a twelve-year-old boy when he was sent to the pagoda. All of his family members and relatives gradually left him. Lacking such family ties and security might increase the likelihood of his offending as broken home and disrupted family are among the risk factors for youth offending.

• **Low bonding to the family**

It might be the issue of being adopted which affected his relationship with the family members of his adopting family. He was not tied to his adopting family, given that there was no connection between him and his parents and his family. He did not have any relationship with his relatives as he never had a connection with his parents. Whereas, most of his relatives in the adopting family did not want to be involved with him after he continuously stole things from others. Therefore, when his foster parents died, no one cared about him and that was the reason he was sent to the pagoda before he committed a crime and being sent to prison.

• **Poor parent-child relationship and low parental involvement**

The relationship between him and his family was poor. His foster parents did not understand him and he never confided to them about anything. He did not want to stay at home, but he preferred to gather with his friends, playing games or doing antisocial activities. He said that his family was important to him, but he was not very influenced by his family.

He hardly had any connection with his parents as they both left him when he was a small child. Although his mother came to visit him in the reform school after ten years, it could not improve the relationship between them. He said that he was only surprised when he saw his mother at the reform school, but he did not have any particular feeling about that. He felt that she was a stranger and he did not know how to talk to her. His relationship with his foster parents was also not very good. Although they were kind to him, he was not close to them, as they were not his birth parents. He admitted that he did not know his foster parents’ age, although he had been living with them for many years.
• Lack of supervision and inconsistent discipline

When living with the adopting family, he was old enough to realise that they were not his parents, although they were, by his own admission, very kind to him. They wanted a son to perpetuate their family lineage in the Vietnamese tradition, but they could not. Therefore, they adopted him and took care of him with the hope that he would fulfil the duty of perpetuating the family lineage. Therefore, they spoiled him to ensure that he would be happy to live in the family. They just let him do the things he wanted with a significant lack of supervision. He admitted that his parents never knew where he went and whom he was involved with. Therefore, they did not find out when he was highly engaged in games and he usually truanted to play games.

He also had a significant issue of lack of supervision. His foster parents could not supervise him when they were alive. When both of them died, he totally lacked supervision and no one could help him with controlling his behaviour and activities. Therefore, it was not surprising that he was involved in offending and arrested again after being released from the reform school.

When he was highly involved in stealing, fighting and other antisocial activities, his foster parents could not do anything other than beating him. However, that inconsistent discipline did not work for him when he continued stealing and fighting. Although he had stolen money from his foster parents many times, they did not find an effective way to prevent him from doing that. When he stole things from others and he was arrested by the commune police several times, no better solution was applied. The inconsistent discipline might be the reason he kept stealing things until he was sent to reform school and prison after that.

• Parental substance abuse and domestic violence

His foster father was alcohol addicted and he usually beat his wife and children when he was drunk. Therefore, Duy did not respect him, going so far as to say he hated him. Besides, when his foster father was drunk, Duy had more time to play games or do other things without any supervision.

Domestic violence was also a problem in his family. His foster father usually used violence against his wife and the children, especially when he was drunk. His foster mother and his sister were trying to avoid being beaten by the father at that time, while Duy ran out of home.
for games. Duy was regularly beaten by his father. Moreover, as he was also involved with violence and delinquent activities at school and he did not respect his foster father, the violence in the family might potentially have increased his delinquent behaviour. These substance abuses of his foster father might have significantly affected other family factors, including domestic violence, the bonding to the family, inconsistent discipline and lack of parental supervision. The combination of these factors might have a strong effect on his involvement in offending.

School risk factors

- **Low bonding to school, truancy and dropping out of school**

Although Duy’s study results were quite good, his conduct, in terms of attitude and behaviour, were not. When he was in grade 6, his conduct was rated by teachers as bad. After his foster parents died, he still went to school. However, at that time he was also engaged in games, so he **truanted** more regularly. The teacher seemed to be helpless with him, given that he did not have any close family members. He lacked close ties to school which led to his dropping out of school after that in grade seven, just before he was sent to the reform school. It could be argued that dropping out of school increased the likelihood of his involvement in games, criminal activities and delinquent peers, which then led to his conviction.

- **Negative attitude to school**

He was usually teased by several students in the class because of his family circumstances. The fact that he had to live with his foster parents significantly influenced him. He admitted that he felt very upset and angry when other students teased him about being abandoned by his biological parents and being adopted. He could not confide with any others about this issue. He then isolated himself from others to avoid being teased again. However, some others still teased him and he resisted by fighting them. That was the reason he became more involved with fighting in school, which might lower his self-control and increase his aggressiveness as well.

- **School violence**

He was heavily involved in fighting at school. Although he explained that he never bullied others, he was involved in numerous school fights. He admitted he normally hit other students
in the class and most of them did not retaliate. However, some of the students who were beaten by him called their parents and family members to school to exert their revenge:

‘As I was small, I could not run when they found me in the school. They were all adults, so they were very strong. When they slapped or punched in my face, I could feel a severe pain. I sometimes felt ill for several days after being beaten by them. There was no guard at my school so no one could save me. It was common that the people from outside came to the school to attack the students. I never told my foster parents about that.’

In this case, school violence was a significant issue that might affect Duy in his attitude and behaviour. It was another proof of violence among the students in the school in Vietnam, as well as violence from people outside the school toward the pupils. Duy admitted that it was very common for the students in his school to call their family members or relatives, or other people to school for beating others. Moreover, although he said that there was no gang in his school, fighting between students could be seen on a daily basis.

- **Lack of school management**

In most of the cases of fighting, the principal and the teachers did not know about the fighting and did nothing to intervene. Moreover, there was no school guard to protect the school and the students. A poor security and management culture put the students at high risk of victimisation. This suggested significant problems with school management and dealing with school violence and the safety of students at school, which also appeared in many other cases in this study.

Moreover, there was a lack of connection between family and school in managing the students. That would have increased the likelihood of his involvement with games, fighting and truancy, as his foster parents did not know what was happening to him in his school. Moreover, while Duy had numerous problems with continuously stealing things from others at home, his teacher might not know about that for help with solving the problems.

**Peer risk factors**

In this case, Duy seemed to be significantly influenced by his peers though he did not have any close friends. As he was isolated from many students at the school and was not close to his
family, he still found some students to keep company with. He joined student groups who usually truanted for the purpose of gathering at the kiosks near the school or playing games. He would have been significantly influenced by them in his attitude and behaviour.

He started truanting from grade 3 while he was only nine years old, going with his peers to the kiosks for eating and drinking after meeting an acquaintance. He was then involved with games when an older boy in the village took him to the games agency for playing. He then repeatedly stole money and other things from his family and neighbours to satisfy his needs.

Although he admitted that the members of the group were not close to each other as they only went together as they had the same habits, he might not recognise the influences of these peers to him. They might imitate others in truancy, smoking, or stealing things from others.

He was involved with theft from early in his life. However, when being sent to the reform school, he was involved with various other delinquents, who had committed various types of offence before entering the reform school. He joined a group of ten boys who would usually have meals together and sleep in the same areas.

‘I was in the reform school for two years. During that time, I lived in a room with about 40 other boys, aged from 12 to 17. They were informally divided into four groups and these groups usually fought with others when the members of the groups had conflict. As we usually fought at night and we always kept silent during the fighting, the teachers [police officers] did not know about that. I was regularly involved in fighting in the reform school though the fighting was not serious as we did not want to be punished. No one could live there without joining a group. During the time in the reform school, I only learnt the negative things.’

In Duy’s own words, the reform school helped teach him ‘negative things’. Group involvement and participation encouraged his aggressive proclivities. This might be the reason he was always rated as low achieving. Therefore, he had to stay in the reform school for two years, the longest time for the reform school term while others might leave earlier. More importantly, Duy was the only participant who had previously been sent to a reform school, but this case had strongly suggested the adverse effects of being sent to a reform school on the young offenders.
Community risk factors

- **Poverty**

In this case, though Duy did not commit his offences because of poverty, it was significant to note that the impact of poverty was a major risk factor, which led to other risk factors in his family, which, in turn, increased the likelihood of his involvement in offending. He stressed that his mother had to leave him because she could not take care of him due to her economic impoverishment. She just wanted to give him to another well off family so that he would have a better life.

Then when his foster parents died, he was sent to a pagoda as no one could take care of him and the economic condition was again a significant risk factor. Therefore, poverty was a significant risk factor in this case which increased other risk factors including neglect, lack of parental involvement, and lack of parent-child relationship. It could be argued that the impact of poverty had been mediated through other risk factors in contributing to his offending.

- **Influence of the internet and online games**

He was very engaged with online games and the internet. He played several kinds of games, but Crossfire was the game he liked best. Although he did not think that he was game addicted, he agreed that he played games too much.

‘I spent all the money I had for online games. I usually stayed all night at the internet agencies for playing games. The longest time I had spent on playing online games was three continuous days in the internet agency without leaving. I could have noodles and water right in there, so I did not feel tired during that period. I think that I played games so much.’

Besides, he admitted that he also watched violent films when he accessed the internet. His high involvement with violent games and the internet might be a significant problem for his offending. More importantly, the direct reason for his offending was to have money for playing games, given that he had serious problems with his family circumstances. He explained that he needed money for games and that was the reason why he stole a lot. He also concluded that the involvement with games was the direct and primary reason for his offending.
Overall, through the case of Duy, it was clearly seen that there were numerous risk factors that potentially influenced him in his involvement in youth offending. Aggressiveness and violence, risk-taking behaviour, restlessness, smoke addiction and early age of conviction were among the important individual risk factors. Being abandoned and adopted, poor ties to the family, a poor parent-child relationship, lack of supervision and inconsistent discipline were among the family risk factors. Isolation from others; joining gangs; and involvement with delinquent peers was among the peer-related risk factors. School violence, truancy, dropping out of school, lack of school management and poor relationship between school and family are among the significant risk factors in school that might have increased the likelihood of his involvement in offending. Moreover, one of the most critical social risk factors was his intense engagement with games. It was unclear if he was more violent and aggressive because of the games he played, but the direct reason for his conviction was occasioned by seeking money for playing games. While he was in prison, he seemed to be better and his sentence had been reduced two times and he would come back to the community soon. His mother was the only family member he could look for help, but she was also in difficulty with her family. Therefore, he was at a high risk of recidivism, as he did not have a functional family although he said that he would try his best to reform his life.
CASE 8: GIANG

Quick-temper
Low self-control

Violent
behaviour

Conflict with
others

Criminal
activities

Truancy

School
management

Lack of
supervision
and parental
involvement

Physical
abuse

Lack of
policing

Criminal
father

Risk-taking
behaviour

Violence in the
community

Available of
firearms

SHOOTING
ANOTHER GROUP
BY A SHOTGUN

Joining
gangs

Dropout of
school

Adverse peer
influence

School violence

Violent
behaviour

Criminal
activities

Low self-control

Conflict with
others

Being attacked

Quick-temper

School
management
CASE 8: GIANG

Giang was born in a district in a suburb of Hanoi. He was convicted when he was over 16 years old. He was serving his prison term of four years’ imprisonment because of the crime of causing public disorder and illegally stockpiling and using military weapons.

He looked quite younger than his age and he seemed to be gentle on first meeting. However, during the meeting, when he talked about his life experiences, he seemed to be much more mature than that. Moreover, the information he provided at the beginning of the interview was incorrect, which was then revealed to himself when he gave other information in conflict with the previous one. For instance, he said that he was not risk-taking and he was rarely involved with fighting at school. However, after that, when talking about his peers and school, he admitted that he joined a group of friends, which was considered the ‘strongest group’ in his school. No one dared to get in conflict with his group, or they would be seriously attacked.

However, he might try to protect himself from any negative outcomes, given that he did not know about the contents of the interview at the beginning. When it was explained that he did not have any obligation to answer the questions and he had the chance to reflect and consider before responding to the question, he became more open.

He was involved in school violence and bullying others at school. He was quite lazy and the result was not good. He left school when he was in grade 8. He was involved with some delinquents at school as well as in the area he lived.

His father was in debt because he owed money to his business, but he could not return the money on time. One day, a group of 10 people came to his house, shouted at them, broke the furniture and threatened to kill them if his father did not return the money. The next day, when he and one of his friends were going to the village, they met some people in the group coming to his house the day before. He and his friend were hit and chased by that group. Getting angry he came back home and took a shotgun and came back. He shot two bullets up to the sky to threaten others and all the people ran away. He explained that he just shot the gun to threaten the other group so that they would not attack him and his family again.

Then he came back home to hide the gun and ran to his friend’s house to hide. He said that one of his ‘brothers’ lent him the shotgun and he stored the gun at home for shooting birds.
In this case, numerous risk factors were identified.

**Individual risk factors**

- *Lazy and less obedient*

He admitted that he was lazy in both studying and helping his parents with the housework. Although his parents tried to persuade him as well as use harsh punishment with him, he did not change at all. He did not obey his parents and he became independent of his parents and the family very early. He said that he was not close to his father and he never confided to him about anything. Especially when his father was involved with in gambling and lost almost everything, he did not respect his father so did not want to obey him. This was very similar to the case of Phuong (case 18) which led to no ties and no respect of the children to the parents. However, Phuong ran away from home to live on his own in Hanoi until he was arrested while Giang still stayed at home with his parents. His offending might be linked to his father’s involvement with gambling and his debt, given that he was involved with delinquent friends while he was not close to his family.

- *Risk-taking behaviour and low level of empathy*

Although he was young and his face looked gentle, he was very risk-taking from the time he was very young. He was regularly involved in fighting in his school and he dared to attack the students who were in a higher class than him. Although he was thinner and shorter than many other students in his school, he still attacked them when they had conflict. He said that when he got angry, he became a risk-taker and other students were afraid of his low empathy and risk-taking behaviour. Therefore, he was usually the one who hit others.

His risk-taking behaviour was well illustrated throughout his conviction, in which he used a shotgun to threaten others so that they would not dare to get in conflict with him again. However, it was very dangerous to use a gun for solving conflict as it might be out of control when they were fighting. He knew the legal consequences and the dangerousness of stockpiling and using a firearm, but he just did it. However, that was not the first time he was involved in fighting and shooting. Before his conviction, he had been participating in another case, in which his group was shot by another group that caused injury to one of his ‘brothers’. In that case, he was not prosecuted for criminal activities, but he was handled with administrative measures while the offenders were punished for murder and illegal use of
firearms. The risk-taking behaviour might play a critical role in his involvement with offending, especially when he used firearm weapons to solve the conflict.

- **Indulging in amusements**

He admitted that he did not like school when he first went to school and he never thought that school was important to him. He only wanted to go to school for gathering with his friends, playing, teasing other people and fighting. His family used to be quite well off as his parents were successful in their own business before they opened a pawn shop. Therefore, his parents used to give him money when he went to school and he could use his money to gather with his peers in the kiosks near the school. When his father was highly engaged with gambling, he became broke and the pawn shop had been closed. Giang said when he saw the situation, he spent more time with his group, teasing and bullying other students. He was involved with several stubborn boys in his village when going to school. However, after dropping out of school, he did not want to work, but he spent more time with his delinquent friends and he was involved with fighting more regularly, including serious fighting using weapons. It might be his indulging in amusements which led to his low bonding to school and increased his involvement in antisocial behaviour and delinquent friends.

- **Quick-tempered, lack of self-control, violent and aggressive behaviour**

He explained that when he was going to school, he was usually involved with fighting as he could not control himself when having conflict. Therefore, most of his conflict ended up with fighting. He rarely negotiated with others to solved the problems between them, but preferred using violence. After a period, when he and his group had became ‘famous’ in the school, no one dared to resist him.

He also had conflict with other groups and people in the area he lived and they sometimes fought with others. Before the case happened, he had met and fought with some people in the other group several times. However, he never used a gun in fighting with them. In this case, he was attacked by many members of that group while he was going with one of his friends, so he and his friend were beaten and chased. Getting angry with that, he came back home to take the shotgun and called back to arrange a meeting for ‘solving issues’. He immediately shot two bullets when they saw each other. Despite being well prepared for the fighting, all the member of the other group ran away when he shot the gun.
• **General offence and antisocial attitude**

He was involved in fighting at school and he had been called to the commune police several times. However, like many other cases, he was only stayed there to write a document describing the situation and promising not to do that again before he was allowed to go home. Therefore, this did not actually work for him.

He was regularly involved with fighting regularly, but he was never handled for the case where his group was shot. He explained the reason was his father was in debt and he could not return money on time, the same reason with the case of his conviction. A group of people chased and hit his father to force him to return the money. Then his father called him and he immediately called a group including his friends and ‘brothers’. They attacked the other group to rescue his father and all of them come back to his house. Then the two groups arrange another meeting that night, in which his group was shot and a member of his group was seriously injured. Several members of the other group were prosecuted while many others, including Giang, were administratively handled.

• **Restlessness**

One of the reasons that he usually had conflict with others was he always wanted to annoy others. While he did not like studying, he became more stubborn at school, given that he felt very disappointed about his father as he explained. He, therefore, did not focus on his study, but he usually teased other students in his class, even during the class. When not in the class he gathered with his group, teasing and bullying others. Therefore he was always among the stubborn students in the school and this was the reason he could not go to grade nine although he passed the final exam. The school had contacted his parents for solving the problems, but his father did not care about that. He was busy with his ‘business’ while his mother could not change him as she always spoiled him. His father did not beat him for that as he knew that it did not work for his son. Giang admitted that beating him could not change his behaviour and he was not afraid of being hit by both of his parents.

**Family risk factors**

• **Low parental involvement**

He admitted that he was not very close to his parents and they were not involved with him as well. His parents did not know well what happened to him at school, whom he was involved
with and what the problem was he facing. The relationship between Giang and his parents was very lax. He said that he never confided anything to his father as he did not feel close to him. His father seemed to be cold and rejected the children after he was involved in gambling and debt. Therefore, he felt himself to be distant from his dad and he rarely talked to him.

- **Spoiled by parents**

He was the only son in the family and he would be the one who inherited the property and took care of his parents when they were old, according to Vietnamese tradition. Therefore, he was spoiled by his parents, especially his mother. While his parents seemed to be quite strict to his sister, he was treated differently from his two sisters. When his family was still well off, his parents never let him lack anything. They usually bought him the things he wanted and gave him money for buying the things he wanted. Therefore, he was not very influenced by his parents, which resulted in that his parents could not control nor supervise him later. Therefore, he might have more chance to be involved with delinquent peers and antisocial activities.

- **Poor family bonding**

As he said, he was not very close to his family. His mother was the closest to him in the family, but it was just because she spoiled him the most. Therefore, no one in his family had a strong influence on him. He was not at home regularly as he felt that it was boring. He enjoyed going out and gathering with his peers. After dropping out of school, he had more time to gather with his friends and get involved with antisocial behaviour. He explained that he told his parents that he wanted to drop out of school to help them with working to earn money, but he did not do that. He was rarely at home after that although he did not do any work to make money. His mother advised him to find a job for earning a living but he did not want to work while his parents did not know what he was doing during the day with his peers.

- **Inconsistent discipline**

He said that he was used to being punished severely by his father when he made mistakes. However, that only happened when he was in primary school (less than 11 years old). At the same times, his mother indulged him and treated him differently from his father. She usually tried to prevent his father from beating him and they sometimes argued with each other.
because of him. Moreover, she usually tried to offset him after being beaten by his father. He even considered being beaten by his father the chances for requesting the things he wanted from his mother, as he knew that she would do that to make him happy. The inconsistent discipline in the family delivered by his parents had spoiled him as he understood that he would be okay even when he made serious mistakes. He then became resistant to his father’s punishment and he was not afraid of him anymore.

- **Criminal parents.**

His father even got him in trouble when called him to help to solve the problems related to gambling and debt. Therefore, in both of the cases, Giang was involved with crime in relation with his father. His father was first involved with gambling when he opened a pawnshop and he lent other people money for interest. However, as some of them owed a significant amount of money for gambling, they could not pay back the money as they had lost all. He said that his father knew that they were involved in gambling, but he still lent them money as they were willing to pay higher interest rates than usual. When they could not pay the money back, his father had to search for them in the ‘illegal casinos’ to make sure that he would not lose his money. However, he became engaged in gambling during that time. Therefore, though he could take back much money from the debtors, he then lost all in the ‘casino’. He even had to close the pawnshop and owed money from others with very high interest for gambling, with the hope that he could take back his money. However, he could never do that and he was in debt for a long period after that. As the pawnshop was closed and most of the property in his family had been sold, he could not return the money. The creditors searched for him and even attacked him several times. He also fought against them, which resulted in the two cases that Giang was involved with offending. In this case, Giang was not only involved with offending as an imitation of his father’s behaviour but he might be directly engaged to be involved in crime by his father. Although his father might not have intentionally encouraged him to commit an offence, he did put him in a circumstance with a high risk of offending. He explained that he could not stand and look at his father being attacked by others. Therefore, he tried his best to protect his father by resisting the creditors, which increased the conflict between them. When being attacked by the creditor group, he chose to use the gun to solve the problems.

In this case, his father and his uncle were involved in the crime as well. Both of them were punished for the crime of concealing crime while they helped Giang to hide the gun after he
was committed the crime. They were prosecuted and judged in the court as well. However, both of them were punished with suspended sentences and they were not incarcerated, although they received several limitations due to the punishment.

- **Lack of supervision**

When he was going to school, his father did not care about the family and the children after he was engaged in gambling. Therefore, he did not know that he was depressed about the circumstance and he did not want to study. He became a stubborn pupil, who only truanted, teased and bullied others. Even when he had to study grade 8 again because of his bad conduct at school his father did not change.

Even when his father knew that he was involved with delinquent peers and antisocial behaviour, he did not stop him from doing that, as he was involved in crimes as well. Moreover, he still did not change his supervision with his son and Giang was free to do the things he wanted. He then became more engaged with his group and delinquent friends.

‘My parents were all busy with their job, so they did not spend much time for me. They normally did not know the places I was in and the people I joined with. They never searched for me when I was not at home. My mother sometimes called me to tell me to come back early, but my father never did as he sometimes left home for several days. I had plenty of time to gather with my group and my ‘brothers’ and I learnt a lot from them.’

- **Family conflict and domestic violence**

He had experienced violent punishment by his father while he was very young, but it did not happen when he grew up. However, while his father reduced the harsh punishment with him, the conflict between his parents increased significantly after his father was engaged in gambling. His mother usually complained about her husband’s behaviour, but he did not care about that. When he closed the pawnshop and sold things in the house for money to pay for his debt, there were serious arguments between them. His father usually shouted at his mother and he sometimes even beat her when she complained about him. He and his sisters did not dare to stop his father when he was angry. After beating his mother, his father usually left for several days before he came back when he had run out of money. The conflict
between his parents increased and they hardly talked to each other. The children did not talk to their father as well.

He said that his father had changed and he was not involved with gambling anymore before he was convicted, as there was nothing more to be sold in his family. He also seemed to hesitate when being asked if his father was still involved in gambling. However, as the researcher noted that he should consider before answering the questions, he then responded that his father had stop engaged with gambling. It was unsure if his father stopped gambling, but he might have reduced his involvement with gambling, given that he was punished with a suspended sentence and his only son was incarcerated.

**School risk factors**

- **Low bonding to school and academic failure**

As he admitted, he never thought that school was important to him, so he went to school just for fun but not for studying. He did not focus on his study and he was lazy as well. Moreover, as his attitude and his behaviour at school were not good, he was judged as among the stubborn students and therefore, the teachers and others student might have a negative impression of him. Therefore, he only received a low achievement grading and a ‘bad conduct’ rating during the grades he had studied. The academic failure and negative attitudes from others might significantly reduce his bonding to school and increased the likelihood of his involvement with stubborn friends and antisocial behaviour, such as fighting, bullying and truanting. These were the factors, which could negatively influence his attitude and behaviour and increase his likelihood of being involved in offending.

- **Truancy**

This was also a significant problem that resulted in his low school bonding, academic failure and his dropping out of school. As he did not enjoy studying and the teachers and students might not have wanted him to be in the class as well (as he might distract others from focusing on the lesson), he truanted regularly. Moreover, he was involved with delinquent friends at school, so he spent much time with them and he might have found many interesting activities other than studying. Although he was punished by the teacher and the problems were reported to his family several times, nothing was changed while he kept truanting. When he was highly engaged with fighting in schools, the teachers and other students in the class seemed to ignore him as they could not do anything to change him. He was rated as
‘bad conduct’ and he was not qualified enough for getting to a higher glass (when he in grade 8), which led to his retention of grade 8 the next school year.

- **Grade retention**

Although there were not many studies about grade retention and offending among students, several studies conclude that school retention negatively influences student’s behaviour.

In this case, Giang dropped out of school only a short time after he was retained in grade 8. Although he had had many issues with his study and behaviour at school, being retained in grade 8 seemed to be a significant factor. This might have increased his aggression and antisocial behaviour, given that he might have felt to be isolated from the new classmates after being retained. Therefore, the grade retention did not improve his academic achievement or his conducts and behaviour. This might even have worsened his attitude toward school and led to his dropping out of school soon after his fifteen birthday.

- **Dropping out of school**

His dropping out of school seemed to be unavoidable when he was retained in grade 8, given that he never liked going to school. He admitted that he felt unhappy at home, so he did not want to stay at home, but he did not wish to go to school as well. He just went to school to gather with his friends, teasing and bullying others. When he was retained because of bad conduct, he first felt a little bit ashamed although he was familiar with being ‘different from others’. Therefore, he intended to drop out of school, but his mother encouraged him to keep on studying so that it could be easier for him to find a job after finishing school. However, when going to class, he found out that the situation was much worse that he had expected.

‘All the students in my class were younger and smaller than me so I could not join them. Most looked at me with strange eyes and they seemed to keep a distance from me. I did not have a friend in the new class and I felt isolated. I got angry with them and I became more aggressive so that I beat other students in the class more often. It only made them stay further from me although they were afraid of me. I was also punished by the teachers after every time I hit others.’
• **School violence and victimisation**

Like many other cases in this study, school violence was a visible problem, in this case, which might have increased the likelihood of Giang’s involvement in offending. He admitted that he fought at school regularly and he even joined with his group to fight against other groups. As he said that his group was the ‘strongest’ in his school, other students did not dare to fight with them, but they normally beat others without being resisted. While he was isolated in his class after being retained, he might be interested in bullying others so that they did not dare to ignore him. He also admitted that school fighting happened very often at his school between individuals and groups. Several students even called people from outside of the school to come for fighting with others. Weapons were also used for fighting, but there was no case of serious injury in his school. However, he had been called to the commune police several times because of beating others, which caused them injury. The violent environment in school and the habits of bullying others significantly contributed to his offending later.

• **Lack of school discipline and management**

School violence has been a significant issue in Vietnam recently and the intervention programs were not very effective. Schools were blamed for not focusing on student management and skills and behaviour training but just focus on academic matters. In this case, it was clearly seen that there was a lack of discipline at school. There were severe problems related to school offending, bullying and gang membership. However, the school did not seem to have any effective response. There was only one school guard, who handled opening and closing the gates and doors of the school. He never did anything to prevent violence in the school, or he might be so afraid of the delinquent students and their groups that he did not dare to intervene.

Giang admitted that the teachers in the school got bored with him and they did not care what he was doing at school. They might have wanted him to drop out earlier so that the school became peaceful. Therefore, before he dropped out of school, teachers never checked for his attendance or punished him for his mistakes. He was free to be in or out of the class without any supervision. The ignoring of the teacher and other students gave him another strong reason to drop out of school after that.

**Peer risk factors**
Delinquent peers in school and the community

During the interviews, he sometimes mentioned his ‘brothers’, but he did not have any brother in his family. He explained that they were ‘social brothers’, whom he usually joined with when he had free time. He explained that they were living in the same area and they knew each other when they were still small children. He was severely influenced by these ‘social brothers’ as most of them had problems with dropping out of school, unemployment, violence, firearms and gang membership. They might have been event involved with drugs as they usually went to bars and karaoke, although Giang did not mention it in the interview. In the first case in which Giang was handled with administrative measures, one of his ‘social brothers’ was shot and then administratively handled as well. In his case of stockpiling and using firearms, two other ‘brothers’ were also prosecuted and punished. The first one was the man who lent him the shotgun while the second one helped him with hiding the gun after that. His father and his uncle were also prosecuted for helping him to hide the gun, but they only received suspended sentences.

At his school, he joined a group of five, who were aggressive and violent. They were all lazy and stubborn, who did not focus on study. They usually joined and bullied other students in the school. They were always willing to help if a member in the group wanted to fight against others. One of them was involved in the same case with Giang when they went together to take the gun and shot two bullets after that. He was also prosecuted for the crime of using military weapons. The involvement with delinquent friends appeared to be an outstanding risk factor for Giang’s offending.

Joining gangs

He joined the group at his school, which included his closest friends as he said. They usually gathered for truanting, teasing and bullying others. Therefore, he might have negatively influence the group. However, he was involved with not only a delinquent group at his school but also another group in his locality. He did not talk much about his activities in the community. However, information on the court judgments also pointed out that he was involved with not only fighting at school but also fighting with other groups in and around his area. While he said that he was not influenced by his peers and his group in committing crimes, he might not have seen, or he might have pretended not to see the influences of his peers to his behaviour.
Community risk factors

- **Availability of weapons**

It seemed that it was very easy to access firearms in this case as Giang was involved with two cases of shooting. This was quite strange as stockpiling of military weapons is strictly prohibited outside of police and army forces in Vietnam. However, it is understandable as controlling of weapons is also a problem in Vietnam. The weapon trading also related to drugs trading that is also an alarming problem in Vietnam as many drug traffickers prepare guns, grenades and other weapons for resisting when detected so as to avoid a death sentence. Therefore, it might be easy to buy a gun. Giang explained that the shotgun was used for shooting birds and he knew others who also used that kind of gun for hunting. However, when being used for committing crimes, this shotgun is no less dangerous than other types. The availability of weapons was a significant factor for his offending in this case.

- **Neighbourhood disorder**

He explained that the area where he lived was not far from a famous pagoda in Hanoi. Many people from other places visited the pagoda regularly, which might have led to issues with public order and safety. He said that there were deviant behaviour in the area including drug addiction, gambling and fighting in the areas. Although gambling is illegal in Vietnam, it is very difficult to detect and prevent gambling as there are numerous kinds of gambling, which can happen in various places. Therefore, his father was seriously involved with gambling until he lost almost everything, but he was not detected and arrested. When talking about his father’s involvement in gambling, he only mentioned that it happened in the past so there would be no legal responsibility for his father as there was no evidence. Although he stated that his father then stopped his involvement with gambling, it was unclear if he did. However, because of the safety of other people, no detailed information was asked about that and it was supposed that he did not gamble anymore. However, there was disorder in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, fighting happened regularly in the area with the use of dangerous weapons, including firearms. He pointed out that several youths in his area were arrested because of fighting with dangerous arms and he was not the first one to be arrested because of involvement with using firearms. The availability of firearms, in combination with the neighbourhood disorders might multiply the risks of Giang’s involvement in youth offending,
given that he was previously involved in antisocial behaviour while his family has significant conflict with others because of his father’s debt.

- **The internet and violent films**

He admitted that he was not engaged with games or the internet, though he sometimes went online for watching films. As he explained, he knew how to use the shotgun through the violent films he watched. However, this seemed not to be realistic as using a gun might be different from the things that can be seen on movies. Therefore, he might learn to use the gun through his ‘brothers’. However, the internet and violent films might have their effects on him in terms of violence and aggressiveness.

Overall, a number of risk factors that might have contributed to Giang’s offending had been identified in this case although he might still hide the details of his life experiences and involvement in delinquency. Risk-taking behaviour, aggression, impulsiveness, restlessness and low self-control were among the significant individual risk factors. Low parent involvement, family conflict, inconsistent discipline, lack of supervision and parental criminality were the most outstanding risk factors in the family domain. Besides, involvement with delinquent peers, joining gangs, the availability of firearms and neighbourhood disorder were significant factors related to peers and community. In the domain of school, truancy, academic failure, school violence, grade retention, dropout of school and lack of school discipline and management might have had critical effects on Giang’s behaviour and his involvement in offending.