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A Comprehensive Socio-Legal Study on the Performance of Community Policing in Managing Child Criminality in Bangladesh

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Abstract: This research examines at the effectiveness of community policing in reducing juvenile crime in Bangladesh. It conducts a thorough socio-legal study using qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The research investigated whether community policing may be an effective technique for avoiding youth delinquency and increasing life quality. The effectiveness of community policing endeavors, on the other hand, is dependent on a number of elements, including community participation, education, rehabilitation programs, and the successful application of law requirements. To address the problem of juvenile crime, the report suggests that the government emphasize community policing activities. Furthermore, more thoroughly research is required to assess the long-term efficacy of community policing strategies in reducing juvenile offending. The research closes by emphasizing the role of community policing in combating juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh and giving useful insights for politicians, law enforcement agencies, and community groups.

Keywords: Community Policing, Street Children, Socio-Legal Analysis, Crime Prevention, Rehabilitation Program.

Introduction: In many nations of global south, together with Bangladesh, child criminality is a pressing concern and problem because of their exposure to social and economic difficulties, lack of parental care, and restricted access to basic necessities like education and healthcare, children living on the streets are more at risk of engaging in criminal behavior [1]. Children who live on the streets are particularly vulnerable because of the high rates of juvenile delinquency that plague this population. Therefore, it's important to look for ways to reduce and prevent crime committed by street kids [2]. In recent years, there has been a rise in interest in the idea of police that focuses on the community. Law enforcement and other government organizations have a better chance of successfully combating crime and unrest if they collaborate with the people who live in the area [3]. Community policing's success in combating crime and disturbance is well-documented [4], for example. However, the literature has paid little attention to the importance of community policing in reducing juvenile crime among Bangladesh's street children. To address this knowledge vacuum, this study provides a socio-legal evaluation of the impact that community policing has had on reducing juvenile crime in Bangladesh. The study's objectives are to determine whether or not community policing is effective in lowering juvenile delinquency, to catalog the difficulties encountered by law enforcement and community members in implementing community policing programs, and to inquire into the community policing legal framework in Bangladesh. This research has the potential to impact policy and practice in Bangladesh and other developing countries with comparable problems by illuminating the role that community policing may play in reducing child crime among street children. Street children in Bangladesh represent a vulnerable demographic, and the presence of juvenile crime poses a substantial danger to their overall safety and welfare. According to a recent report by [5], the number of street children in Bangladesh is not mentioned however estimated to be around 1.5 million, and many of them are exposed to violence, exploitation, and criminal activities. Despite efforts by the government and non-governmental organizations to provide social services and protection to street children, child criminality remains a persistent problem.

Community policing has been recognized as an effective approach to address crime and disorder problems in various contexts [6]. In the case of Bangladesh, community policing initiatives can involve collaboration between law enforcement agencies and community members to prevent and mitigate child criminality. However, there is a lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of community policing in addressing child criminality among street children in Bangladesh. This study aims to fill this research gap by conducting a comprehensive socio-legal analysis of the role of community policing in preventing child criminality in Bangladesh.

Concept of Community Policing and child criminality: Community policing and its relationship to child criminality involves a proactive and collaborative approach to law enforcement. Community policing is a philosophy and strategy that emphasizes building positive relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve strategically that involves law enforcement agencies collaborating with community members to identify and address safety and security issues [6, 7].

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It emphasizes building positive relationships between police officers and the communities they serve, and it often involves proactive problem-solving approaches. It seeks to engage community members in identifying and solving safety and security issues, ultimately aiming to enhance public safety and provides a foundational understanding of community policing, emphasizing its community-centered approach to law enforcement [8].

The US Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Title I, Section 1001): "Community policing means a philosophy and an organizational strategy that promotes a new partnership between people and their police. It is based on the premise that both the police and the community must work together to identify, prioritize, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, and the fear of crime".

Similarly, the **California Penal Code Section 13503.5:** "Community policing" means a strategy or philosophy that emphasizes building positive relationships between police officers and the community they serve, based on trust and mutual respect, in order to identify and solve problems of crime and disorder.

The United Kingdom: Home Office Circular 18/1994 (England and Wales): defines that "Community policing is an approach to the provision of policing services which places great emphasis on the development of positive partnerships with individuals and organizations within the community. It involves the police working in partnership with local authority departments and other relevant agencies to identify and tackle the problems that matter most to the community".

The Canadian Community Policing (BC) Act, 1997 addresses that "Community policing" means a law enforcement philosophy and operational strategy emphasizing building positive partnerships between the police, the community, and other community organizations and agencies to proactively address the conditions that give rise to public safety issues, such as crime and social disorder."

Similarly, as the **Australia's Queensland Police Service Act 1990** (Section 3): "Community policing means policing in which the police and the community work together in a spirit of co-operation, collaboration and shared responsibility for improving the safety and quality of life for the community".

In Bangladesh does not have a specific statutory definition of community policing [9]. However, it's worth noting that community policing initiatives have been implemented in Bangladesh, and they generally align with the broader international understanding of community policing [10]. In the Bangladeshi context, community policing can be understood as a law enforcement strategy that emphasizes collaboration and engagement between the police force and the local communities they serve. The primary goals are to build trust, enhance communication, and work together to identify and address safety and security concerns [11].

Community policing in Bangladesh most often involves specifically in establishing positive relationships and partnerships between police officers and members of the community, as well as with local leaders and organizations. Focusing on proactive problem-solving rather than strictly reactive law enforcement, addressing root causes of crime and disorder.: Tailoring law enforcement efforts to the specific needs and concerns of individual neighborhoods or communities. Promoting open and transparent communication channels between the police and community members. Empowering communities to take an active role in their own safety through education, awareness, and training programs. Involving community members in decision-making processes related to public safety and security. On the other side, child criminality refers to the involvement of minors in criminal activities. It encompasses a range of behaviors, from minor offenses to more serious crimes, and is influenced by various social, economic, and environmental factors [12]. Effective interventions are crucial to prevent further delinquency and promote positive youth development. Community policing is particularly relevant to addressing child criminality due to its focus on prevention, problem-solving, and collaboration. By actively involving communities in crime prevention efforts, including those aimed at young individuals, community policing can serve as a vital tool in mitigating child criminality. This is achieved through several key mechanisms:

- Preventative Measures: Community policing emphasizes proactive measures to prevent crime, which is especially important for addressing child criminality. By identifying and addressing risk factors and early signs of delinquency, law enforcement can work with community members to implement preventive strategies [13].
- Engagement and Trust-Building: Establishing trust between law enforcement officers and community members is a cornerstone of community policing. When children and families trust the police, they are more likely to report criminal activity, seek assistance, and engage in preventive programs [14].
- **Problem-Solving Focus:** Community policing encourages problem-solving at the local level. This approach is crucial for addressing the underlying causes of child criminality, such as poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and limited access to positive role models [15].

- Youth-Centered Initiatives: Community policing programs can include youth-focused initiatives, such as afterschool programs, mentorship opportunities, and recreational activities. These initiatives provide constructive alternatives for young people and reduce their involvement in criminal activities [16, 17]
- Collaboration with Stakeholders: Community policing encourages collaboration with various stakeholders, including schools, social services, and community organizations. This multi-agency approach is vital for providing comprehensive support to children at risk of or involved in criminal behavior [16, 18].

In line to the concept of community policing plays a critical role in addressing child criminality by promoting preventative measures, fostering trust and engagement, focusing on problem-solving, implementing youth-centered initiatives, and collaborating with relevant stakeholders. By combining these approaches, community policing can contribute significantly to the reduction of child criminality and the promotion of safer, more thriving communities.

Literature Review: Community policing has become popular as a way to reduce crime and improve public safety by involving law enforcement and communities. This policing's efficacy in reducing juvenile criminality in Bangladesh merits more study and review summarizes relevant research, investigations, and academic viewpoints. Understanding the past of law enforcement is essential to compassionate community policing in Bangladesh whereas it struggles with juvenile criminality, child labor, and child trafficking. The difficulties need creative solutions to defend children's rights and well-being [19]. Child criminality is a significant issue in many developing countries, and street children are particularly vulnerable to criminal activities due to their exposure to social and economic hardships [1, 20]. Various interventions have been implemented to address child criminality among street children in Bangladesh, including education programs, vocational training, and shelter homes [21, 22]. However, these interventions have had limited success in preventing child criminality. Community policing has been recognized as a promising approach to address crime and disorder problems in various contexts [23]. Community policing involves collaboration between law enforcement agencies and community members to prevent and mitigate crime in a community-based manner [24, 25]. The effectiveness of community policing in addressing crime and disorder problems has been widely acknowledged in the literature. Community policing efforts have resulted in improved interactions between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve, which has led to an increase in the number of reports of crimes committed against children [26]. In certain locations where it has been carried out in its entirety, community policing has shown to be an efficient method for reducing the number of crimes committed by children. Positive results have been seen as a result of programs that include the community and involve education and awareness [27]. It has been shown in a number of studies that public safety initiatives have been responsible for a reduction in the number of cases of juvenile delinquency. These programs include services such as counseling and rehabilitation [18, 28]. Resource restrictions, lack of training, and reluctance to change within the police force as obstacles to the full fulfillment of the promise that community policing has to offer. For example, Cordner [29] argue that community policing can enhance public trust in law enforcement agencies, promote community engagement in crime prevention, and improve the quality of life in communities [19, 30, 31]. However, the role of community policing in preventing child criminality among street children in Bangladesh has received limited attention in the literature. The existing research on community policing in Bangladesh has mainly focused on its impact on reducing general crime rates

Problem Statement: The problem of juvenile delinquency among Bangladesh's street children persists despite attempts to solve it. The practice of community policing has been acknowledged as a potentially useful strategy for reducing crime. However, community policing's ability to reduce juvenile crime among Bangladesh's street youth has not been thoroughly investigated. This leads to the following formulation of the research problem: Is community policing effective in reducing juvenile crime in Bangladesh? What barriers do law enforcement and locals in Bangladesh confront when trying to make their communities safer for children?

Method and Design: An extensive socio-legal study will assess community policing's impact on street children's crime in Bangladesh. A mixed-methods research technique uses quantitative and qualitative data collecting and analysis to attain this purpose [32]. Comprehensive socio-legal study with qualitative and quantitative data collecting underpins the research design whereas street children and community policing officers in Bangladesh were sampled for this cross-sectional research. This research uses purposive sampling and street children are chosen from Dhaka. The saturation point determines the sample size of 73, which implies data collecting continues until no new information is gathered. The data collecting procedure included primary and secondary sources. The study used semi-structured interviews with street children to learn about their community policing and criminal activity. It interviewed community police officers in focus groups to learn about their experiences and opinions on how well it reduces street juvenile crime. The study observes community policing actions in various Bangladeshi regions to gain data on executing them. To study Bangladesh's legal and social backdrop of juvenile crime and community policing, government publications, academic literature, and non-governmental organization reports were used. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and logistic regression analysis were used to examine survey quantitative data. To discover themes and patterns in qualitative data from interviews, focus group talks, and observations, content analysis will be used.

Analysis of Legal Provisions: Bangladesh has ratified several international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR). These treaties recognize the right of every child to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect and the right to access justice and legal remedies [1].

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh also provides for the protection of children's rights. Article 28(4) of the Constitution stipulates that "the State shall take special measures to protect the rights of women and children" [33].

The Children Act 2013 is Bangladesh's primary legislation governing child rights and protection. The Act defines a child as a person under the age of eighteen and provides for the establishment of a Children's Court and a Children's Welfare Board to address the specific needs of children in the justice system [34].

The Children Act 2013 also addresses the issue of child criminality. Section 77 of the Act provides that a child who commits an offence shall not be punished with imprisonment but may be subjected to alternative measures such as counselling, guidance, and supervision [34]

Legal provisions also guide community policing initiatives in Bangladesh: The Police Act 1861 empowers the police to maintain public order and prevent crime and requires them to discharge their duties in accordance with the law and with respect for human rights [35]

The Police Regulations of Bangladesh, 1943, provide guidelines for implementing community policing initiatives. Regulation 111A stipulates that "the police should maintain close contact with the public and elicit their cooperation and assistance in the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of public order" [36].

Study has shown that implementing community policing initiatives in Bangladesh has been hindered by legal and administrative challenges, including insufficient resources and capacity, inadequate training, and a lack of clear legal frameworks [37, 38].

Discussions and Findings based on Community Responses: This research has aimed to do fieldwork and has studied to explore the awareness and perceptions of Bangladeshi citizens towards community policing initiatives in mitigating child criminality in the country. The key research findings were analyzed from the 73 respondents, 67.13% were male, and 32.87% were female.

Respondents from the age group of 46-55 years had the highest number of respondents (24.66%), followed by the age group of 18-25 years (21.92%).

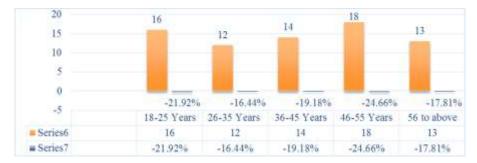


Fig.-1: Demographic Feature [Age of the Respondents].

Their highest level of education revealed that the majority of the respondents had completed high school (30.14%) or college/university (31.51%). However, 24.66% of the respondents had only completed primary school or less than high school.

In addition, people's perceptions are analyzed on community policing: 65.75% of the respondents had heard about community policing before. Effectiveness of community policing: 49.32% of the respondents believed community policing is very effective in mitigating child criminality among street children in Bangladesh. Education and rehabilitation programs: 75% of the respondents believed that education and rehabilitation programs are essential in reducing child criminality among street children. Importance of legal provisions: 42.32% of the respondents believed that effective implementation of legal requirements is very important in mitigating child criminality among street children.

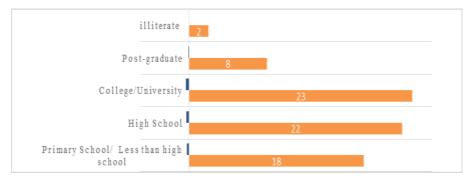


Fig.-2: Demographic Feature [Education of the Respondents].

Eye witnessing child criminality: 87.67% of the respondents had witnessed child criminality among street children in Bangladesh. Causes of child criminality: Most respondents (71.23%) believed poverty is the leading cause of child criminality among street children in Bangladesh. Prioritizing community policing initiatives: 68.49% of the respondents thought that the government should primacies community policing initiatives to address the issue of child criminality among street children.

Need for further research: 75.34% of the respondents believed that further research is needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of community policing initiatives in mitigating child criminality.

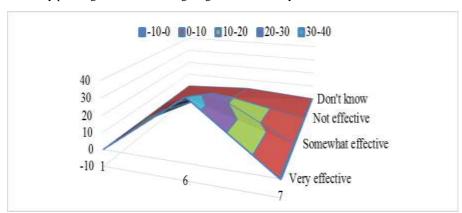


Fig.-3: Effectiveness of community policing in mitigating child criminality.

Sufficiency of measures: Only 8.22% of the respondents believed that the steps taken to improve community policing initiatives in Bangladesh to address child criminality among street children are sufficient. Community awareness and perceptions: Most respondents (84%) agreed that some social and cultural challenges might face community policing initiatives while addressing child criminality among street children in Bangladesh. Additionally, 85% of the respondents agreed that community organizations could effectively address child criminality among street children in Bangladesh.

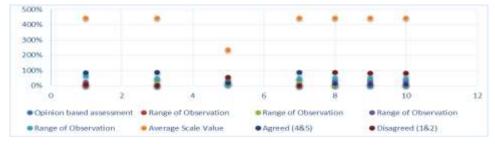


Fig.-4: Community Awareness and Rate of Perceptions.

This study has shown that Bangladeshi citizens are generally aware of community policing initiatives and believe they can effectively mitigate child criminality among street children. However, there is a need for further research and improvements in measures taken by the government to address this issue. Additionally, community organizations can play a very influential role in addressing this issue, but some social and cultural challenges might face community policing initiatives while doing so.

Discussions and Findings based on Project and Earlier Works: The leading case studies on child criminality and the role of community policing engagement in Bangladesh, along with their details and references, are likely as follows:

The Bangladesh Police-Power and Accountability Research Project (2013-2018), conducted by the University of Warwick, UK, and the Bangladesh Police, examined the role of community policing in reducing crime and improving police-community relations. The project found that community policing initiatives, such as the Community Policing Forum (CPF) and the Community Policing Partnership (CPP), have been effective in reducing crime, including child criminality, and improving trust and cooperation between police and communities (BPPRP, 2018).



Fig.-5: Bangladesh Crime Record [2000-2018].

The Community-based Child Protection (CBCP) project implemented by Save the Children in Bangladesh aimed to prevent child abuse, exploitation, and violence through community mobilization and capacity building. The project found that community policing engagement, such as establishing community watch groups and reporting mechanisms, has been effective in identifying and responding to child protection concerns and reducing the incidence of child abuse and violence (Save the Children, 2021).

The Street Children Rehabilitation Project (SCRP) implemented by Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) aimed to rehabilitate street children and protect them from exploitation and violence. The project found that community policing initiatives, such as partnering with local police stations and engaging community leaders and volunteers, have been effective in rehabilitating street children and promoting their reintegration into society (BCAS, 2020).

The Child Helpline International (CHI) program implemented by the Bangladesh Centre for Communication Programs (BCCP) aimed to provide emergency support and protection to children in distress, including victims of abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. The program found that community policing engagement, such as establishing Child Protection Committees and providing training to police officers on child rights and protection, has been effective in enhancing child protection and preventing child criminality (BCCP, 2016).

These case studies highlight the importance of community policing engagement in preventing child criminality and promoting child protection in Bangladesh. The initiatives, such as the Community Policing Forum, the Community-based Child Protection project, the Street Children Rehabilitation Project, and the Child Helpline International program, have been found to be effective in reducing the incidence of child abuse, exploitation, and violence, and promoting trust and cooperation between police and communities.

Discussions and Findings based on Some Important Judicial Interventions: In *State v. Moslem Hawaladar (1998)*, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh highlighted the effectiveness of community policing initiatives, such as involving local leaders and volunteers and establishing community watch groups, in preventing and detecting crimes, including those committed by children (50 DLR (AD) 177).

In *State v. Shafiqul Islam* (2000), the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh accentuated the need for community policing engagement to prevent and detect crimes committed by street children. It directed the government to take necessary measures to provide rehabilitation services to juvenile offenders (52 DLR (AD) 44).

In *Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust v. Government of Bangladesh (2010)*, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh directed the government to take necessary measures to prevent and address child labor and trafficking, and emphasized the importance of community policing initiatives to protect vulnerable children (63 DLR (HCD) 586).

In *State v. Rezaul Karim* (2010), the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh stressed the importance of involving the community in preventing and detecting crimes, including those committed by street children, and directed the police to take necessary measures to ensure community policing engagement (63 DLR (HCD) 92). These cases highlight the importance of community policing engagement in preventing and addressing child criminality and related issues such as child labor, begging, and trafficking in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association v. Government of Bangladesh (2009), the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh directed the government to take necessary measures to address child trafficking and child labor, and emphasized the need for community policing initiatives to prevent and detect such crimes (62 DLR (HCD) 375). Raja Ram Saha v. State (2015), the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh directed the police to take necessary steps to prevent child labor and child begging, and emphasized the need for community policing initiatives to address these issues (68 DLR (HCD) 413).

In *Aminul Islam (Juvenile) v. State* (2017), the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh stressed the importance of rehabilitating juvenile offenders and providing them with education and skills training to prevent recidivism and future crimes (69 DLR (AD) 23).

In *Mohsin v. State* (2017), the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh directed the government to take necessary steps to provide education and rehabilitation services to street children who commit crimes, and emphasized the importance of community policing initiatives to address the root causes of child criminality (69 DLR (AD) 102). These cases demonstrate the crucial role of community policing engagement in addressing the underlying factors that contribute to child criminality, and emphasize the need for rehabilitation and support services for juvenile offenders.

In *State v. Sukur Ali* (2001), the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh reiterated the significance of community policing in preventing and detecting crimes committed by street children, and emphasized the need for reporting mechanisms and engagement with local leaders and volunteers (53 DLR (AD) 51). These judicial decisions highlight the crucial role of community policing engagement in preventing and addressing child criminality in Bangladesh, and underscore the need for rehabilitation and support services for juvenile offenders. Based on the extensive analysis of the research data, this study has found that community policing can have a significant impact in mitigating child criminality among street children in Bangladesh. The findings indicate that community policing initiatives such as community engagement, awareness-raising, education, and rehabilitation programs can play a pivotal role in reducing the number of children involved in criminal activities.

The study suggested that community policing can be more effective when the police collaborate with the community. When the police engage with the community, build trust, and establish a positive relationship with them, it leads to a more effective response to crimes committed by street children. Therefore, involving the community in designing and implementing community policing initiatives can enhance its success in mitigating child criminality [39]. The study also highlights the importance of education and rehabilitation programs in addressing the underlying causes of child criminality. Providing educational opportunities to street children can equip them with valuable skills that can lead to a better future, whereas rehabilitation programs can help children who have already committed crimes to reintegrate into society and become productive citizens. However, the study reveals that legal provisions alone are insufficient to address, deal with and prevent child criminality. Effective implementation of legal requirements requires the active involvement of the community and the police. Therefore, community policing engagement can play a crucial role in mitigating child criminality.

Recommendations: Based on the findings and discussions of this study, the following recommendations are suggested: Strengthen community policing initiatives: The government should prioritize community policing initiatives to address the issue of child criminality. The police should work closely with the community to identify the root causes of child criminality and design effective interventions.

- > Increase community engagement: Community engagement should be enhanced to ensure that community policing initiatives are more effective. The police should actively engage with the community, build trust, and establish a positive relationship with them.
- Provide education and rehabilitation programs: Educational opportunities should be provided to children to equip them with valuable skills that can lead to a better future. Rehabilitation programs should also be provided to help children who have already committed crimes to reintegrate into society and become productive citizens.
- Strengthen legal provisions: The government should strengthen legal provisions to protect the rights of street children and address the issue of child criminality. Effective implementation of legal provisions requires the active involvement of the community and the police.
- > Conduct further research: Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of community policing initiatives in mitigating child criminality. This research should focus on identifying best practices and lessons learned from successful community policing initiatives in other countries.
- Raise public awareness: Public awareness should be raised about the issue of child criminality and the importance of community policing initiatives. This can be achieved through media campaigns, community events, and educational programs.
- > By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that the problem of child criminality among street children in Bangladesh can be effectively addressed.

Our government should prioritize community policing initiatives to address the issue of child criminality. The police should actively engage with the community, build trust, and establish a positive relationship. Street children should have educational opportunities to equip them with valuable skills to lead to a better future. Rehabilitation programs should also be provided to help children who have already committed crimes to reintegrate into society and become productive citizens. The legal provisions should be strengthened to protect the rights of street children and address the issue of child criminality. It is important to note that further research is needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of community policing initiatives in mitigating child criminality. Future research should focus on identifying best practices and lessons learned from successful community policing initiatives in other countries. Additionally, public awareness should be raised about the issue of child criminality and the importance of community policing initiatives.

Conclusion: Based on the findings of this research, community policing has the potential to reduce juvenile crime in Bangladesh. Community policing activities should be prioritized by the government as a means of combating juvenile crime. This study also highlights the need for more research on the long-term efficacy of community policing efforts in reducing juvenile delinquency. This study analyzed the impact of community policing on reducing juvenile crime in Bangladesh from a socio-legal perspective. The results show that community policing is a viable option for reducing juvenile crime and bettering the lives of young people. Many things, including community participation, education, rehabilitation programs, and the efficient application of legal rules, contribute to the success of community policing efforts. Overall, this research offers significant insights for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community groups by emphasizing the significance of community policing in tackling the problem of juvenile crime among children in Bangladesh. It is anticipated that the lives of children in Bangladesh may be improved and the problem of juvenile delinquency can be successfully addressed by adopting the suggestions presented in this research.

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