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## **Beyond Misconduct: A New Perspective on Delinquent Adolescents**

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## **BEYOND MISCONDUCT: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON DELINQUENT ADOLESCENTS**

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### **Abstract**

The generation of present-day adolescents is the future national asset, by which this group has a vital role in the future leadership and governance of the country. However, countless cases and news of teenagers' involvement in social misconduct pose a great concern to various parties. The rise in the cases of adolescents' involvement in delinquency misconduct poses a great concern to society. It shows the need for effort to encircle it. The research gap of this article is due to lack of knowledge about delinquent adolescents among society. Therefore, this article aims to identify a definition of delinquent juvenile. The method used is qualitative, and the main instrument of the study is SLR (Systematic Literature Review). A rigorous criteria for inclusion of studies was developed, comprehensive search strategies were employed to identify eligible published studies. Twelve studies based on 880 articles reviewed met the inclusion criteria. A detailed discussion of these 12 literature reviews is presented through two dimensions, the differences and similarities in the definition of delinquent adolescents. Hence, the findings of this study propose the definition of delinquency indirectly is all misconduct leading to negative things that damage the morals and personality of an individual adolescent and negatively impact the adolescent himself, his family, race, religion, and country. The findings greatly can contribute to the corpus of knowledge on adolescents and delinquents.

**Keywords:** Definition; Adolescents; Delinquents; Malaysia; Systematic Literature Review.



## A. Introduction

Adolescents are a national treasure that needs to be guided and helped to make good and healthy decisions in life (Sharma, 2022). The phenomenon of delinquency that occur among teenagers today are becoming more severe and growing that needs to be addressed immediately. Delinquent adolescents have since been a 'global issue' observed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with over one million children worldwide have been placed in prisons (Bochenek, 2016). Therefore, the problem of delinquency among teenagers today is an issue of grave concern and gets the attention of all sections of society. The youth are the young generation who will assume the country's leadership in the future, whether in the economy, education, politics, etc. High hopes are placed on them to emerge as valuable individuals and contribute to the well-being and advancement of the country.

The stark reality today is that society is grappling with significant moral decay and social issues among adolescents-a phenomenon observed worldwide, regardless of whether the countries are developed or underdeveloped, with Malaysia being no exception (Tunggak et al., 2015; Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022). Cases of theft, house break-in and fighting are among the misconduct committed by delinquent adolescents. The importance of research studies on adolescents also shown by study of Abu Bakar and Hamzah (2019), found that 27.1% of adolescents placed in moral rehabilitation centres committed violence, 48.6% committed sexual abuse, 7.1% committed drug abuse and 17.1% had other social problems. Compared to all kinds of misconduct, the rate of sexual abuse is the highest. This phenomenon cannot be underestimated as the issue of crime among adolescents today can lead to more severe criminal treatment.

This study aims to systematically review and analyze current research on the definition of delinquent adolescents in Malaysia. Understanding this definition is crucial as it contributes to the broader body of knowledge on adolescents and delinquency. While the general definition of delinquent juveniles aligns with those used internationally, there are slight variations in its application in Malaysia, where the term "delinquent" is rarely employed in local studies.

Various factors have been identified as contributors to social misconduct in society. Al-Qurṭubī (1967), in his book *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, explains that social problems, particularly among young people, stem from factors such as poor-quality home environments, feelings of discontentment, loneliness, boredom, parental conflict or divorce, limited to nonexistent interactions between parents and children, and a lack of love and attention from busy, working parents (Stapa et al., 2012). The fragility and collapse of family institutions significantly contribute to the growing social unrest (Daud et al., 2020; Nasrudin, 2013; Tunggak et al., 2015).

The causes of crime are complex, encompassing psychological and social conditions that interact to produce certain behaviors. According to a survey conducted in Kutaisi, most respondents identified family relationships as a significant factor contributing to crimes committed by minors. They noted that many teenage offenders lack proper attention and care from their parents. Additionally, respondents highlighted that children whose parents are working abroad often find themselves in unsuitable or "misguided" environments. Homeless children and those living on the streets are also considered at high risk. Psychological trauma resulting from exposure to harshness and violence, as well as negative interactions with criminal justice authorities and other institutions, was also cited as a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency (Gogua, 2020; Huda, Ali, et al., 2024).

The findings of this study are significant because no previous research has examined the definition of delinquent adolescents with such precision and detail. Earlier studies have predominantly focused on factors, causes, problems, and solutions related to adolescent delinquency, without delving into its definition. This study's importance lies in its focus on the social issues faced by adolescents today, providing a more precise understanding of the term "delinquent" and introducing new knowledge for those unfamiliar with it. Moreover, the study contributes to addressing the challenges faced by adolescents involved in delinquency, offering pathways to self-development and a better future. Beyond the discourse on defining



delinquent adolescents, this article provides deeper insights into their experiences. Specifically, the definition of delinquent adolescents can be derived from the daily activities and experiences typical of the adolescent phase, offering a clearer and more practical understanding. With a well-defined comprehension of delinquency, stakeholders can more effectively address the issues facing adolescents, ultimately fostering greater awareness and support for troubled teenagers. This understanding encourages collective efforts to guide them toward improved lives and brighter prospects.

This perspective is supported by previous research, such as the study by Asaduzzaman (2010), which highlights the difficulty of defining juvenile delinquency and the challenge of providing an accurate definition. In many countries, the concept of juvenile delinquency has been vaguely and inconsistently defined, underscoring the importance of a clear definition to aid in organizing effective prevention programs. To arrive at a functional definition, it is essential to recognize that juvenile delinquency is not merely a legalistic concept, as it is sometimes perceived, but rather a specific pattern of behavior. This pattern becomes particularly significant when it exhibits aggressive tendencies, causing concern or anxiety among those affected. In simpler terms, juvenile delinquency can be understood as an antisocial tendency observed in young people.

The study by Choi et al. (2018), highlights that adolescent delinquency refers to behaviors that deviate from social norms, as also described by Lee (2014). Due to the lack of a consistent definition of juvenile delinquency in previous studies, most research, including the current one, tends to focus on deviant behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and unauthorized absenteeism from school—common forms of misconduct among adolescents. While these behaviors may not be considered problematic for adults, they are viewed as irresponsible due to the societal expectations placed on adolescents (Senna & Siegel, 2014). This perspective is further supported by Young et al. (2017), who note in their review that the term “delinquent juvenile” is commonly used in academic literature to



describe young individuals who have committed criminal offenses. However, the exact definition varies depending on the local jurisdiction, adding to the complexity of defining juvenile delinquency.

This study aims to define delinquent adolescents to better understand the issues and challenges they face today, providing valuable insights for stakeholders involved in developing programs for their rehabilitation and growth. Therefore, this study is an effort to find the definition of delinquent adolescents in order to understand the issues and problems facing adolescents today. This explanation could also benefit stakeholders associated with delinquent adolescents development programs.

## B. Method

This qualitative study employs the systematic literature review (SLR) method, which involves a structured approach to identifying the most accurate definition of juvenile delinquency. The references for this study primarily consist of works published between 2015 and 2020. The researchers limited their selection to articles from the past five years to ensure relevance and recency, making them suitable as guides and references. This approach also facilitates the identification of differences and similarities in the definitions and perspectives presented.

Previous studies are categorized into two segments: the first focuses on the definition of "juvenile", and the second addresses the definition of "delinquent". Any matters unrelated to the research questions and objectives are excluded from the systematic literature review (SLR).

This study utilizes the SLR method, encompassing the study's background, problems, methods, and definitions. Through a systematic search, this method aims to identify the most accurate and appropriate definitions of "juvenile" and "delinquent". The principles of SLR have been widely adopted by recent researchers to examine the extent to which phenomena align with research keywords (Amran et al., 2020; Kamal & Hussin, 2020; Michie & Williams, 2003).



The following 5 electronic bibliographic databases were searched: Google Scholar, Researchgate, Academia and Scopus. These databases were selected because they had the most comprehensive coverage of criminological, social science, and educational literature. The following terms were used to search these databases: "definition", "adolescent delinquent" and "juvenile delinquent". When applicable, "delinquency", "crime", and "evaluation" were added to these terms to narrow the search parameters.

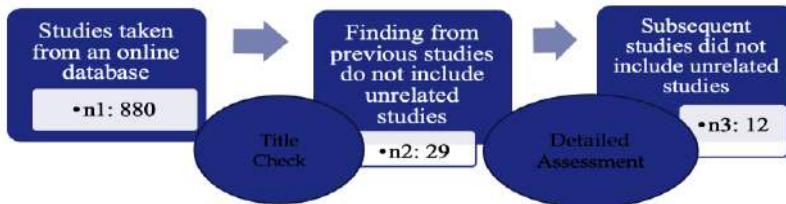


Figure 1. Primitive source (Source: Michie & Williams, 2003)

The definitions of adolescents and delinquents are the main criteria in the analysis of this study. Among the criteria of articles selected in this study are articles published in the last five years, from 2015 to 2020. Next criterion, the selected articles only focus on and discuss the definition of delinquent adolescents directly. Of the total 880 articles related to the study, only 12 literature reviews are accepted for analysis, as shown in Figure 1.

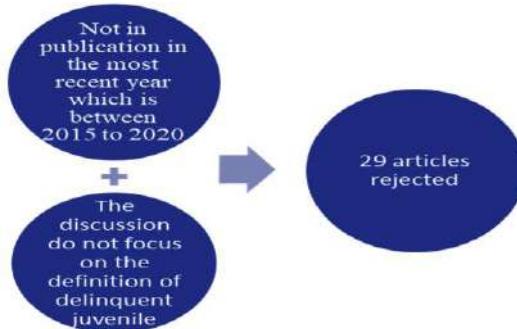


Figure 2. Justification of the excluded article

Meanwhile, the remaining 29 articles were not selected because the emphasis of the literature review was not relevant to the objectives of this study, as illustrated in Figure 2.

## C. Result and Discussion

The objective of this study is to identify accurate and appropriate definitions of delinquent adolescents both domestically and internationally.

### 1. Result

#### a. Definition of Adolescents

Adolescents are individuals considered old enough to be in the phase of puberty, marking a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. During this phase, rapid changes occur in biological, physical, mental, and emotional development, alongside shifts in responsibilities and roles (Sulaiman, 2017). To navigate these changes, adolescents often encounter challenges and conflicts, which can result in tension and emotional stress (Md Sham & Mohd Nazim, 2015).

In Arabic, the term for adolescent is *murāhaqah*. The word *murāhaqah* is derived from *rahaqa*, which linguistically conveys meanings such as foolishness, frivolity, wrongdoing, tyranny, and engaging in forbidden actions. It also refers to acts of deception or imposing burdens beyond a person's capacity, as well as connotations of dishonesty and haste. Simultaneously, *rahiqa* signifies nearing adulthood and approaching full maturity. Additionally, *al-rahq* means to dominate or increase and can describe situations reflecting the emotional state of an adolescent (Elias, 1997; Syamsul et al., 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, there is no specific term for adolescence; however, this age group is generally included within the broader category of youth, often referred to as *shabāb* or *fatā*. Terminologically, adolescence or youth is understood as the phase of human life beginning at puberty and lasting until the late 30s (al-Bustānī, 1982). al-Ghazālī (1967), defines adolescents as individuals who have reached puberty, a stage where they are considered to have developed a perfect mind and sufficient maturity to independently manage their affairs (Puteh, 2001; Huda, Selamat, et al., 2024).

In addition, the definition of adolescence has been widely explored by psychologists such as Hall (1905), Mohamed (1990) and others. One common perspective describes adolescence as a period of physical



development and a socio-cultural phenomenon reflected in attitudes and behaviors (Hamid, 2014). It is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, marked by significant physical, intellectual, and emotional changes that can create internal conflicts and challenges in interactions with the environment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence encompasses individuals aged 10 to 19 years (WHO, 2019).

A juvenile is defined as a child, specifically an individual who has not reached the age of criminal liability as prescribed under Section 82 of the Penal Code and is under the age of 18, according to the Child Act 2001. This Act governs the Juvenile Court System. In alignment with the Child Act 2001, the Department of Social Welfare has established several moral rehabilitation institutions, including Tunas Bakti School, Taman Seri Puteri, Asrama Akhlak, and Henry Gurney School.

#### b. Definition of Delinquent

The term *delinquent* is derived from the Latin word '*delinquere*', meaning neglect or negligence, and has since evolved to encompass meanings such as being evil, antisocial, engaging in crimes, and breaking rules (Kartono, 1986). Cohen (1955), interprets delinquent behavior as the violation of institutionalized expectations—norms that are shared and deemed valid within a social system. Based on this definition, delinquent behavior is understood as immoral conduct or actions contrary to societal norms, often observed among high school students. Santrock (2012) defines delinquent adolescents as individuals who break the law or engage in behaviors considered illegal. While children under the age of 18 are categorized as juveniles, the term *delinquent* applies to adolescents exhibiting unlawful behaviors typically associated with adults. However, children under the age of 7 are not referred to as delinquents, even if they commit misconduct or break the law. Instead, they are described as "troubled children", as they are not yet capable of rational thinking to discern whether their actions are good or bad, lawful or unlawful (Vijayanath et al., 2010).

Based on the various opinions, perspectives, and writings from academic standpoints, the definition of delinquent adolescents can be summarized as behavior reflecting a deviation from rational thinking. According to Mustafa (2017) and Najmuddin (2003), delinquency refers to the actions and activities of adolescents (students) that violate societal norms, legal regulations, and religious principles. Examples of delinquent behavior include stealing, robbery, rape, adultery, murder, drug addiction, disobedience to parents, defiance toward teachers, skipping school, extortion, physical violence, and bullying.

According to Khuda (2019), delinquent juveniles are individuals, both male and female, typically under 16 years of age. However, some laws define delinquent juveniles as those under 18, with both age ranges serving the same purpose. Adolescent social problems can be categorized into mild and severe delinquent crimes. Minor delinquent crimes include skipping classes or school, rebelling against teachers, and bullying. In contrast, serious delinquent crimes encompass drug abuse, robbery, carrying dangerous weapons, trespassing, threats, and sexual assault (Saleh & Ahmad Saidi, 2015).

The authors of the book "*Juvenile Delinquency: An Integrated Approach*" define delinquency as an act that violates the law, committed by an individual under the legal age (Burfeind & Bartusch, 2015). Therefore, in systematically analyzing this study, 12 articles of previous works were highlighting and discussing the definition of delinquent adolescents; summarized as follows.

Table 1. Definition of delinquent adolescents

No	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Location	Method	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
1.	Tunggak, Ngadi, & Abu Naim	2015	Student Delinquents and Proposed Solutions Through the Integrated Adolescent Muslim Student Personality Model can be	Adolescent/Muslim Student Personality Development Model the Proposed Adolescent/Muslim Student Personality Development Model can be	Malaysia	Qualitative	Delinquent adolescents are characterised as adolescents who behave in violation of school rules and societal norms that reflect the



No	Resear cher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Locati on	Metho d	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
			Developmen t Model.	fully applied. The combination of the roles of various parties can help reduce the problem of student delinquency.			deterioration of adolescent morals.
2.	Ugwu oke & Duruji	2015	Family Instability and Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria: A Study of Owerri Municipality (NIGERIA)	The analyses have shown that children from unstable homes engage more in juvenile delinquency than their counterparts from more stable homes.	Nigeri a	Qualit ative	Delinquent adolescents are identified as adolescents engaged in illegal acts, whether criminal or status of the offender, committed by youth under 18 years.
3.	Musta fa	2017	Case Study on the Phenomeno n Among At-Risk Adolescents in a Religious Secondary School in Kelantan, Malaysia.	Psychological developments and the influence of an unhealthy environment have caused adolescents to have problems in shaping their personalities.	Malay sia	Qualit ative	Delinquent adolescents engage in unlawful activity or in conflict with social norms. Still, it is not always related to aggression and is limited to the age limits of students in school and youth.
4.	Young , Greer, & Churc h.	2017	Juvenile Delinquency , Welfare, Justice and Therapeutic Intervention s: A Global Perspective	This review considers juvenile delinquency and justice from an international perspective. Juvenile crime is becoming increasingly alarming. Many young offenders	Global ly world wide	Qualit ative	Juvenile delinquent refers to an individual who commits a criminal offence whose age (at the time of commission) exceeds the minimum age



No	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Location	Method	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
				fall victim to complex needs, leading to a public health approach that requires a model with a balance of well-being and justice. However, there is a changing and inadequate legal framework and a shortage of expert workforce worldwide.			of criminal liability but not exceeding the age of majority to be legally liable for crime i.e when a person is legally considered an adult. The minimum liability age for crime differs at the international level between 6 and 18, but the age of majority for crime is commonly 18 years.
5.	Deepshikha Agarwal	2018	Juvenile Delinquency in India - Latest Trends and Entailing Amendment s in Juvenile Justice Act	To contain the problem of juvenile delinquency in India, the Act on Juvenile Delinquency has been amended, to include juveniles involved in heinous crimes be tried as adults.	India	Qualitative	The delinquent juvenile can be considered as a child who is alleged to have committed/violated several laws, where the act of violation or omission becomes an offence.
6.	Kudrat, E. Khuda	2019	Juvenile Delinquency, Its Causes and Justice System in Bangladesh: A Critical Analysis	To show how juvenile delinquency belongs typically to the illiterate and sometimes with low-income families in Bangladesh and how it is	Bangladesh	Mixed Methods	A delinquent juvenile is a person who is generally under the age of 18 and commits an act that would improperly be prosecuted as a crime if they



No	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Location	Method	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
				impacting negatively on their frequent commission of juvenile crimes.			were adults.
7.	Mohd Haridi , Mohd Saleh, & Mohd Jodi.	2019	Application of Spiritual Elements to At-Risk Adolescents in the Darul Islam and those Islah Malaysia Welfare Organization (PERKID)	PERKID becomes the target of criticism by the naysayers of Islam and those who do not understand their holistic endeavour. PERKID also faces several problems, such as financial problems, the self-identity of the adolescents in juvenile homes who refuse to change, etc. in spite of which, the process of <i>tarbiyah</i> and the application of spiritual elements are still carried out. The results of this study need to be made public so that the community can participate in helping to rehabilitate at-risk adolescents in the country and educating the nation's children to become functional human beings.	Malaysia	Qualitative	Delinquent adolescents refer to adolescents with criminal behaviours such as violence against senior citizens and property for instance, sexual violence, robbery, consuming alcohol, and various petty offences committed by children and adolescents.



No	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Location	Method	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
8.	Sharif udin, Osma n, & Mahm ud.	2019	Delinquent Behavior Among Secondary School Students	It was found that factors of age, gender, and type of school impact delinquent behaviour. This study can also help schools and parents to provide appropriate programs to reduce delinquent behaviour.	Malaysia	Quantitative	Delinquent adolescents are defined as adolescents who have immoral behaviour or misconduct that is contrary to societal norms committed by high school students.
9.	Arrey beson g, A. Ettah & Etta, R. Daru	2019	Social Skills Training and Violent Crimes among Juvenile Delinquent Adolescents, the Case of Borstal Institute of Buea	This study aims to examine the effectiveness of social skills training and violent crime among juvenile delinquent adolescents in the Institute Buea Bostal. This study suggests that social skills training should be systematically integrated into the rehabilitation curriculum.	USA	Quantitative	Delinquent adolescents are defined as "children who seek to act like adults", and such acts can cause anxiety and distress and have also been judged by the court of justice though he may be no different from other unsuspecting children.
10.	Ati Kusmawati	2019	Inner Peace of Delinquent Adolescents From The Islamic Psychology Perspective	It can be concluded that adolescents with delinquent behaviour are expected to have inner peace. There must be social support from all parties, including (1) intensive school	Indonesia	Qualitative	Delinquent adolescent refers to a young person generally under the age of 18, who has behaviour of violating norms, or sinning or identical to



No	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Location	Method	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
11.	Moch. July Pudjiono, Bamba	2020	Legal Counselling: Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency	communication with parents to know the condition of adolescents (students) while at school; (2) strong learning support from parents, teachers and schools is highly substantial as adolescents with delinquent behaviour need more attention so that the learning process can run smoothly and results in good moral values as well; (3) the availability of facilities to aid adolescents to improve such as through religious approach (reading the Qur'an and the study of the meaning of the Qur'an intensively). This is a gradual approach and requires a lot of time, and teachers must have patience in carrying out this task.	Indonesia	Law Extension Study Couns	Delinquents are adolescents who behave badly/
				The problem of delinquent juveniles can be prevented by providing			



No	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Issue/Gap	Location	Method	Definition Adolescent Delinquent
11.	ng Sukarjono & Hery Sumarto	2019	in Nganjuk Village, Maospati District, Magetan Regency	several preventive measures to address juvenile delinquency.	elling Verification	immoral or crime. Juvenile delinquency is a social pathology in children and adolescents caused by a form of social neglect, that they develop a form of deviant behaviour.	
12.	Md. Asaduzzaman	2020	A Study on Juvenile Delinquency in Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges	Bangladesh has yet to implement an entirely separate justice system for children in conflict with the law. This study tries to understand the problem from the core of society. The juvenile delinquency problem is escalating; thus emphasis needs to be given by the juvenile delinquency administration in combination with other society-approach correctional programs.	Bangladesh	Qualitative	Juvenile delinquency, known as juvenile violation or juvenile crime is participation in illegal behaviour by underaged children (adolescents -- individuals younger than the statutory age of majority). To define juvenile delinquency, it can be summed up as "Juvenile actions that make society and life dangerous".

## 2. Discussion

Referring to Table 1, the systematic literature review includes 12 studies that provide a general elaboration on the definition of delinquent



adolescents. 11 articles are from journals with various indexes, such as MyCite (1), J-Gate (1), Google Scholar (4), WoS (1), Scopus (2), Sinta (1), and Garuda (1). While one article comes from a Ph.D. thesis which indexed by Google Scholar. The data is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of publication

Number of Article	Publication	Indexer
1	Jurnal Hadhari	MyCite
1	IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science	J-Gate
1	Doctoral Thesis	Google Scholar
1	British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin	Web of Science
1	PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences	Scilit
1	Journal of South Asian Studies	Google Scholar
1	Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies	Google Scholar
1	Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences	Scopus
1	Aggression and Violent Behavior	Scopus
1	Nuansa: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Kemasyarakatan	Sinta 5
1	Jurnal DAYA MAS : Media Komunikasi dan Informasi Hasil Pengabdian dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat	Garuda
1	International Journal of Legal Developments and Allied Issues	Google Scholar

We also found that out of 12 articles that debate about the definition of delinquent used diversity of methods as shown in Figure 3.

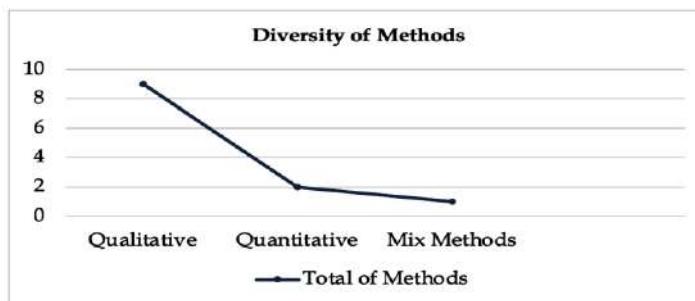


Figure 3. Diversity of methods

Based on Figure 3, there are 9 articles that use qualitative methods, followed by 2 articles with quantitative methods, and one article that uses mixed methods. Most delinquent studies are carried out with qualitative

methods because the qualitative data obtained is very close to the person or situation studied. This allows for a deeper understanding of the subject of study (Jasmi, 2021).

This study also analyzes four studies from Malaysia and eight from other countries, including Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. Hence, Figure 4 shows the distribution of articles by country. From 12 articles, it was found that Malaysia is the region or country most studied by scholars based on the definition of delinquent, with four studies, followed by Indonesia and Bangladesh with two articles. After that, Nigeria, India, the USA, and the global world have one article each. In Malaysia, the term delinquent was introduced in the 1980s (Mustafa et al., 2016). Perhaps the term delinquent is still new, so it is appropriate if many studies are conducted to find out the true nature of this term. Since then, the term delinquency has been widely used in studies related to troubled teens and adolescents at risk in Malaysia (Bakar & Hamzah, 2019; Mohd Nazim et al., 2013). This also shows that delinquency terms and problems are discussed in Malaysia and worldwide, whether in developed or underdeveloped countries (Tunggak et al., 2015).

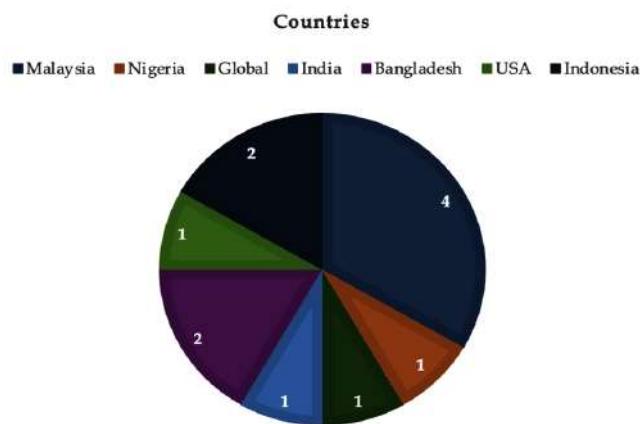


Figure 4. Number of articles by country

Based on the SLR, it is evident that numerous studies on adolescents and delinquency have been conducted both in Malaysia and internationally.



However, the term *delinquent* is less commonly used in Malaysian studies. For instance, research in Malaysia often favors terms such as *at-risk adolescents* or *problematic adolescents*, as illustrated by a study by Haridi et al. (2019), titled “*Application of Spiritual Elements for At-Risk Adolescents in the Darul Islah Malaysia Welfare Organization (PERKID)*”. Additionally, students who violate societal norms or school regulations are often categorized as deviant or delinquent. The term *delinquent* may be unfamiliar to some, as it is rarely used in contemporary society. Instead, individuals exhibiting such behaviors are more commonly labeled with terms such as thugs, rapists, truants, drug addicts, homosexuals, or lesbians. Those who defy societal norms are often grouped under the label of deviant behavior. When such behavior involves teenagers still in school or young individuals, it is categorized as delinquent behavior.

Another example can be found in the study by Ramli and Mohd Nazim (2018), entitled “*Pendekatan Taubat Nasuha dalam Menangani Remaja Bermasalah*” (The Approach of Repentance in Managing Troubled Adolescents), and the study of Zaimah et al. (2021). These studies highlight that at-risk adolescents are often labeled based on various factors, such as distant family ties, school dropouts, peer influence, and negative behaviors, all of which collectively contribute to the threat of social distress.

This demonstrates that the terms *troubled adolescents* and *at-risk adolescents* are frequently used in Malaysian studies when addressing adolescent issues. In contrast, studies conducted abroad commonly use the English term *juvenile delinquent* or *adolescent delinquent*. This highlights a clear distinction in the terminology used in Malaysia compared to international studies. However, a notable similarity among all the articles listed in Table 1 is their shared focus on the same category of delinquent adolescents.

Based on Table 1 above, the dominant year of articles published on the definition of delinquent adolescents is 2015 with 5 articles, followed by 2015, 2017, and 2020 with 2 articles, and 1 article in the year 2018 as shown in Figure 5.

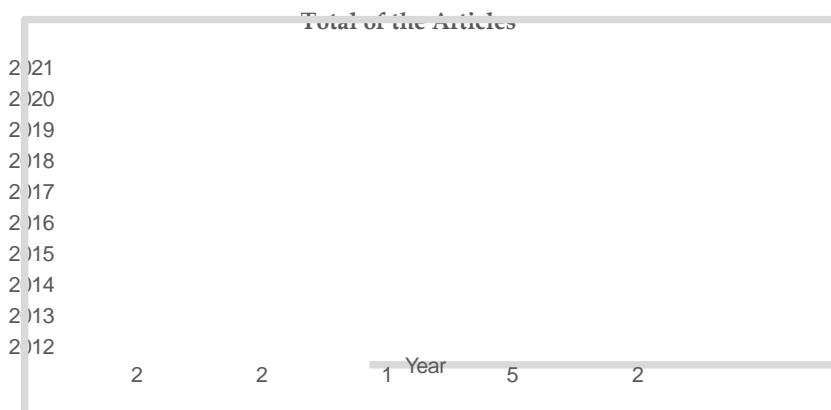


Figure 5. The dominant year of articles published on the definition of delinquent

Moreover, five researchers in 2019—Ati (2019), Ettah & Daru (2019), Khuda (2019), Haridi et al., (2019), and Sharifudin et al., 2019)—explored the definition of delinquent adolescents. While each researcher defines delinquent adolescents from their own perspective, their views remain highly relevant to the evolving contexts of different times, eras, and generations. In summary, they collectively define a delinquent juvenile as an individual exhibiting misconduct, problematic behavior, or malicious activities that violate societal rules and norms, deviate from normal life, and cause harm to themselves or others, often warranting legal prosecution. This aligns with Nurjan (2019) definition, which describes delinquent adolescents as those between the ages of 16 and 18 who engage in rule-breaking behaviors that result in harm or damage to both themselves and others.

Meanwhile, studies by Asaduzzaman (2010) and Pudjiono et al., (2019) also align with this definition of delinquent adolescents. This demonstrates that researchers from 2010 and 2019 share clear and consistent views on the topic. The similarity in their opinions may be attributed to the relatively close timeframes of their studies, which likely influenced the alignment in their perspectives on the definition of delinquent adolescents.

This study also examines the definition of “juvenile delinquency”, a term frequently used in articles and journals to discuss issues related to



delinquent behavior among minors. According to Ugwuoke and Duruji (2015) juvenile delinquency refers to illegal acts, whether criminal offenses or actions tied to the status of the perpetrator, specifically minors under the age of 18. All three researchers agree that juvenile delinquency encompasses illegal or criminal acts committed by children or adolescents under 18. This definition is further supported by Adeboye's studies (2015), who describes juvenile delinquency as antisocial, illegal, or criminal behavior by children or adolescents that exceeds the control or correction of parents, endangers others in society, and becomes a concern for law enforcement agencies. Similarly, Agarwal (2018), defines juvenile delinquency as any law-violating action committed by a child that constitutes an offense. In line with these definitions, Asaduzzaman (2010), views juvenile delinquency as evil or deviant behavior carried out by underage adolescents (minors).

In general, juvenile delinquency refers to various antisocial behaviors exhibited by children. While different societies define it differently, a common observation is that it involves socially unacceptable tendencies displayed by a child at a particular time. In August 1960, during the 2nd United Nations Congress on Crime and Criminal Justice, juvenile delinquency was defined as: "All activities committed by children are considered delinquency if they violate criminal law, are inconsistent with societal norms, and are not recognized as acceptable by society" (Asaduzzaman, 2010).

According to Mustafa (2017), Nurjan (2019), and Sharifudin et al., (2019), delinquency refers to immoral behavior or misconduct that violates societal norms and is typically committed by high school students. Most delinquents fall within the age range of 13 to 18 years. Meanwhile, studies by Abdullah et al. (2018) and Haidir (2017) describe adolescents as immature youths, generally ranging from 11 to 20 years of age, though the age range is sometimes extended from 12 to 21 years.

In general, a delinquent adolescent, as defined by researchers, is an individual undergoing the transition from childhood to adulthood, typically between the ages of 13 and 21, who engages in actions or misconduct that violate societal rules and norms, rendering such acts reprehensible in the eyes of the law and religion. Previous studies indicate that most teenagers involved

in delinquency are between the ages of 13 and 18, with the majority being students still in school. Common delinquent behaviors among school students include truancy, defying teachers, bullying, fighting, smoking, stealing, and other similar activities. Studies from abroad further reveal that adolescents involved in delinquent behavior are often between the ages of 10 and 18. This is attributed to the fact that children and adolescents are highly susceptible to the influences of their environment. The environment, including peer groups and neighborhood conditions, plays a significant role in shaping their behavior and lifestyle (Abd Rahman & Jusoh, 2019). Consequently, adolescents may engage in various delinquent activities such as stealing, disturbing public order, consuming alcohol, using drugs, and more (Dako-Gyeke et al., 2022).

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study utilizes a systematic literature review (SLR) to classify issues related to delinquent juveniles. The researchers were able to access hundreds of articles and journals related to troubled adolescents; however, only 12 studies were selected, as these specifically focused on the definition of delinquent adolescents, which is the central discussion of this article. The study concludes that the appropriate and accurate definition of delinquent juveniles reflects changes influenced by different times, eras, and generations. Furthermore, this article defines adolescents as a group transitioning from childhood to adulthood, typically between the ages of 13 and 21. This transition involves significant changes in physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development, as well as shifts in inclinations, desires, and the ability to adapt to their environment.

Furthermore, the definition of delinquent can be summarized as immoral or deviant behavior committed by adolescents, violating school rules and societal norms, and reflecting a decline in moral values. Additionally, delinquency encompasses behaviors or crimes arising from social neglect, leading to the development of deviant tendencies among young people. It also refers to any inappropriate activity or conflict with social norms, not necessarily related to survival, and is typically associated



with school-age youth. Therefore, the definition of delinquency indirectly is all misconduct leading to negative things that damage the morals and personality of an individual adolescent and negatively impact the adolescent himself, his family, race, religion, and country. Again, this explanation is useful as an input in the planning of self-development programmers for delinquent adolescents.

Based on findings from previous studies, the term *delinquent adolescents* is less commonly used in Malaysian literature, whereas it is frequently employed in writings from abroad. In Malaysia, adolescents involved in social misconduct are often referred to as *problematic* or *at-risk* adolescents, terms that carry a similar meaning to *delinquents*. Recognizing these differences in terminology, this study aims to provide clear definitions for *delinquent adolescents* or *adolescent/juvenile delinquents*.

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