



**UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MALAYSIAN INDIAN  
PRISON DETAINEES OF THEIR GANG LIFE**

By

**VEERA SUNDARI A/P SUPPIAH**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
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Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**October 2021**

**Chairman : Jamilah binti Othman, PhD**  
**Institute : Social Science Studies**

Gangsterism and gangs are pervasive and include every ethnicity in Malaysia, but the participation of Malaysian Indians has reached an alarmingly high level. The involvement of Malaysian Indian in gangsterism has very high impact on society and the peace and harmony of the society and nation. Consequently, the emphasis of this research was on Malaysian Indian prison detainees who were involved in gangs.

Transcendental Phenomenology approach of qualitative research design used to explore the lived experiences of twelve Malaysian Indian prison detainees who were detained for their involvement with gang violent activities. This is to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the gangsters about the journey of their gang life. Data collection included semi structured interviews.

The study utilized purposeful and homogenous sampling strategies. It was guided by three research questions: 1) What did the detainees understand about gangs and gangsterism? 2) Why did the detainees join the gangs? 3) What is the detainees' life experience as a gang member or gangster? Analysis of the data from the first research question understanding about gangs and gangsterism provided two themes namely togetherness and violence. The findings showed that the detainees have knowledge about the organizations and its activities before they join gang.

There were two themes emerged from the analysis based on the second question. Marginalization with four subthemes as poverty, environment,

leadership and protection. The second theme was physical attraction and culture.

These themes, which create the phenomenon that describes the lived experiences of the detainees, formed the basis of the findings of the study. The findings indicated that, marginalization followed by prejudice and inequality, was the underlying reason of Malaysian Indian engagement in gangsterism. As a marginalized population, Malaysian Indians face significant familial, economic, peer pressure, neighbourhood, and education issues. Some commit crime based on their own choice nevertheless they are aware of the seriousness and the impact of being a gang member. The older detainees joined gang mainly for family and people around them and the younger detainees were to gain their satisfaction.

Based on the experience shared, new fact emerged unexpectedly which is the talent of informant that was not noticed and encouraged. Based on the shared experience, an unexpected new fact emerged which was the talent of informers that was not realized and encouraged. This shows that gangsters are not born to be but created by the atmosphere and irresponsible parties.

As a whole, the findings also demonstrated that the reality of gang life differs from the expectations of the informants. The informants endured a great deal of suffering throughout their lifetimes. The majority of informants have recognized their mistakes and desire to leave the gang, but the circumstance is very challenging.

These findings of the study mainly support social Learning Theory and social Conflict Theory. In terms of practical implications, this study would help the parents, teachers and society to understand about gangsters and create a better life for them and help to maintain a peaceful and harmonious country.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

## **MEMAHAMI PENGALAMAN HIDUP TAHANAN PENJARA INDIA MALAYSIA DALAM KEHIDUPAN GENG MEREKA**

Oleh

**VEERA SUNDARI A/P SUPPIAH**

**Oktober 2021**

**Pengerusi : Jamilah binti Othman, PhD**  
**Institut : Pengajian Sains Sosial**

Gangsterisme dan kumpulan samseng berleluasa dan merangkumi setiap etnik di Malaysia, tetapi penyertaan kaum India Malaysia telah mencapai tahap yang membimbangkan. Oleh itu, penekanan kajian ini adalah terhadap tahanan penjara India yang terlibat dalam kumpulan samseng. Dapatan kajian kualitatif tentang kumpulan samseng, yang telah saya lakukan dalam penyelidikan berkaitan dengan pengalaman ahli kumpulan.

Pendekatan Fenomenologi Transendental reka bentuk penyelidikan kualitatif digunakan untuk meneroka pengalaman hidup dua belas tahanan penjara India Malaysia yang ditahan kerana penglibatan mereka dengan aktiviti keganasan kumpulan. Ini adalah untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang pengalaman hidup gengster tentang perjalanan hidup kumpulan mereka. Pengumpulan data termasuk temu bual separa berstruktur.

Kajian ini menggunakan strategi persampelan bertujuan dan homogen. Ia berpandukan tiga persoalan kajian: 1) Apakah yang difahami oleh tahanan tentang kumpulan samseng dan gangsterisme? 2) Mengapakah tahanan menyertai kumpulan samseng? 3) Apakah pengalaman hidup tahanan sebagai ahli geng atau gangster? Analisis data daripada pemahaman persoalan kajian pertama tentang kumpulan kongsi gelap dan gangsterisme memberikan dua tema iaitu kebersamaan dan keganasan. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa tahanan mempunyai pengetahuan tentang organisasi dan aktiviti mereka sebelum mereka menyertai kumpulan itu.

Terdapat dua tema yang muncul daripada analisis berdasarkan soalan kedua. Peminggiran dengan empat subtema iaitu kemiskinan, alam sekitar,

kepimpinan dan perlindungan. Tema kedua ialah tarikan fizikal dan budaya. Tema-tema ini, yang mencipta fenomena yang menggambarkan pengalaman hidup tahanan, menjadi asas kepada dapatan kajian. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa, peminggiran diikuti oleh prasangka dan ketidaksamaan, adalah sebab asas penglibatan India Malaysia dalam gangsterisme. Sebagai penduduk yang terpinggir, kaum India Malaysia menghadapi masalah kekeluargaan, ekonomi, tekanan rakan sebaya, kejiiran dan pendidikan yang ketara. Ada yang melakukan jenayah atas pilihan sendiri walaupun mereka sedar akan keseriusan dan kesan menjadi ahli kumpulan. Tahanan yang lebih tua menyertai geng terutamanya untuk keluarga dan orang di sekeliling mereka dan tahanan yang lebih muda adalah untuk mendapatkan kepuasan mereka.

Berdasarkan pengalaman yang dikongsikan, timbul fakta baru tanpa diduga iaitu bakat pemberi maklumat yang tidak disedari dan digalakkan. Berdasarkan pengalaman yang dikongsi, muncul fakta baru yang tidak dijangka iaitu bakat pemberi maklumat yang tidak disedari dan digalakkan. Ini menunjukkan bahawa samseng bukan dilahirkan untuk menjadi tetapi dicipta oleh suasana dan pihak yang tidak bertanggungjawab. Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa realiti kehidupan geng berbeza daripada jangkakan pemberi maklumat. Para pemberi maklumat mengalami banyak penderitaan sepanjang hayat mereka. Majoriti pemberi maklumat telah menyedari kesilapan dan keinginan mereka untuk meninggalkan kumpulan itu, tetapi keadaannya sangat mencabar.

Dapatan kajian ini terutamanya menyokong Teori Pembelajaran Sosial dan Teori Konflik Sosial. Dari segi implikasi praktikal, kajian ini akan membantu ibu bapa, guru dan masyarakat memahami tentang samseng dan mewujudkan kehidupan yang lebih baik untuk mereka serta membantu mengekalkan negara yang aman dan harmoni.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Jamilah bt Othman, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Educational Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Ismi Arif bin Ismail, PhD**

Professor  
Faculty of Educational Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

**Paramasivam a/l Muthusamy, PhD**

Professor  
Faculty of Modern Language and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

---

**ZALILAH MOHD SHARIFF, PhD**

Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Name and Matric No: Veera Sundari A/P Suppiah

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Chairman  
of Supervisory  
Committee: Associate Professor Jamilah binti Othman

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Member  
of Supervisory  
Committee: Professor Dr. Ismi Arif bin Ismail

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Member  
of Supervisory  
Committee: Professor Dr. Paramasivam a/l Muthusamy

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NEP	New Economic Policy
USA	United States of America
ABH	Ang Bin Hoay
SWO	Science and Wellness Organisation
DTO	Drug-trafficking Organizations
OMG	Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs
MIC	Malaysia Indian Community
NUPW	National Union of Plantation Workers
SRP	Lower Certificate of Education
PMR	Lower Secondary Assessment
SPM	Malaysian Certificate Examination

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Malaysia may appear peaceful on the surface but dig a little deeper and we will find that brutal crimes and violence have coexisted with people's daily lives for generations. Many factors can be linked to these heinous crimes, but gangsterism is one of them. The prosperity of peaceful living is essential in Malaysia since violent crime is correlated to societal progress. Nevertheless, these social issues are growing more pervasively and are threatening the well-being of the people (Manimala, 2014). The rise of gangsterism in Malaysia has raised alarms among members of society, resulting in fear of crime victimization from gangster-related activities (Durairaja, 2019). The involvement of Malaysian Indians in gangsterism has reached an alarming level. Gang members and others involved in the gang committed more serious crimes and were more violent than the non-gang involved peers especially among the Indian society in Malaysia (Durairaja, 2019).

Numerous significant, proactive, and reactive steps are being taken against unlawful gangs and gang members in order to regulate gang-related activities and crimes. However Indian engagement in gangsterism is on the rise (RMP, 2021). This phenomenological investigation study aimed to comprehend the relationship between gangsterism and Indians in Malaysia. According to (Fisher, 2016), the understanding of criminal occurrences must be built on basic assumptions about agents and the environment's essential influence in their behaviour. Fisher (2016), asserted that, "without a complete understanding of the multi layered causes of violent crime, implementing policies to decrease violence may reduce it but not necessarily to the greatest possible extent" (p. 1031). The objective is that the outcomes of this research would provide a better understanding of Indian engagement in gangsterism and make it easier for policymakers and community leaders to develop policies and programs to limit Indian involvement in gangsterism in Malaysia. This chapter examined the historical context of the Indians in Malaysia. I described the literature gap that prompted the conception of this research investigation. As the lead researcher, I determined the fundamental reasons for performing this study, which included my own experiences and passions. I also identified the research issue, the research objective, the importance of the study, and the research questions. A list of commonly used definitions and words is also provided to assist the reader in comprehending the language utilized in this research study.

## 1.2 Background of the Study

Gangs emerge in countries in various forms. Youth gangs, organized gangs, street gangs have been established in every country and carried out unlawful activities (Angela Higginson, 2018). Gangs are not a common social group (Woo D. , 2017). They are more engaged with criminal and violence activities. Gangs and gangsterism have become a major menace to the whole globe, irrespective of race, religion, or nationality (Pawelz, 2018).

Gangs are social groupings within geographical regions that utilized symbols, verbal and non-verbal interactions to declare their group membership and engage in criminal activity to exert authority and control over the territory in which they operate. (De Wet, 2016) and (Cooper, 2012)

Gangs, guns, drugs and violence are interconnected (Ghani, 2017). It is predicted that gangsterism may rise since violent gangs have been seen engaging in brazen turf fights for control over a region in relation to organized criminal operations such as drug trafficking and gambling (CRIME, 2019).

Not only are gangs and gangsterism prevalent in other countries, but they have also become a significant menace in Malaysia (RMP, 2021). Malaysia experienced a glut of violent offences, many of which were attributed to gangs (Ghani, 2017). Over the last few years, law enforcement authorities have closely monitored the activities of gangs and their members. There are currently 72 identified and active gangs in Malaysia that could overrun the country with criminal activity (RMP, 2021).

Gangs and gangsterism have become a major worldwide issue (Ghani, 2017). In Malaysia, the enormous expansion of gangsterism has disastrous impacts on individuals, families, and communities (Durairaja, 2019). According to ACP (Ret) T. Raveendran, (2021), many lives have been lost and significant injuries have been sustained because of gang fighting amongst Indian gangs. Families have lost their only provider.

The families of gangsters or suspects who are members of rival gangs are likewise impacted when the suspects are apprehended, prosecuted in court, or detained under preventative legislation. There is a stigmatization that the suspect's family must endure. The family's struggle to get sufficient funds to support the lengthy court proceedings and attorney fees is an additional obstacle. In the end, needing to borrow money from loan sharks and then encountering issues with loan sharks are additional factors that plague the family (ACP (Ret) T. Raveendran, 2021).

Finally, the Indian community faces the stigma as well. In the 1980s, incidences of gangsterism involving Malaysian Indians became notorious, prompting other races in the nation to label Malaysian Indians as thugs (Durai, 2020).

There are several academics Shankar D, (2018); Moorthy, (2019); Morgan, (2020) have conducted study on gangsterism in Malaysia, particularly Indian participation. Psychological, criminogenic, parental, and societal variables have been highlighted as the driving forces for the Indian gang involvement in Malaysia.

Historically, gangs were formed by individuals, especially immigrants, who were marginalized by more powerful groups. Less powerful groups are often marginalized and subjected to discrimination (James C. Howell, 2010). Based on the history of Malaya, Malaysian Indians are also immigrants from the India sub continental. Therefore, I am interested in investigating in detail the connection between marginalization and Malaysian Indians.

There is no research on the impact of marginalization as a motivating factor for Indians to join gangs and participate in gangsterism. This research will help us understand the phenomena of gangsterism and how marginalization led to the participation or establishment of gangs among Malaysian Indians. When examining the phenomena of gangs, the first theory that comes to mind is the Social Conflict Theory, which examines how social struggle leads to crime, with class conflict acting as the major cause of criminality in all cultures (Quinney, 1970); Sutherland and Cressey, (1970) Social Learning Theory was also applied to the gang phenomena to comprehend how criminal conduct is learnt.

### **1.2.1 The Impact of Gangsterism**

According to Gebo (2018), gangs are a social problem because of the violence they cause in communities. Societies in every nation plagued by gang violence and criminal activity are living in terror. The behavior of gangsters may be life-threatening since, there is a propensity of gang members becoming a murderer (Carlton, 2021). Additionally, some of them fight amongst themselves to demonstrate their superiority (Pawelz, 2018).

The gang activities include drug trafficking, drug substance abuse, violent and criminal acts, destruction of public and private property, and graffiti confrontations between gangs may occur, often claiming the lives of innocent victims (Rima, 2020). These highly visible and widely reported activities of youth gangs have far-reaching effects on the general community (Blackburn, 2017).

Gangsterism has progressively attracted youngsters to indulge in crime. According to the Psychiatry (2017), one of the worst effects of gangsterism in America is the exposure of the youth to violence. Masked in an image of power and respect, gangs set a bad example for children (Ljungkrantz, 2022). It compels the youth to engage in a variety of behavior patterns, including abuse towards teachers and school officials, as well as incidents of violence such as stealing, extorting money, using abusive language, threatening pupils, and beating students, which might ruin their life (Carson, 2017).

Few studies have been undertaken in Malaysia that specifically address Indian gangsterism (Morgan, 2020; Moorthy, 2019; Durairaja, 2019; Alagappan, 2010; Yahaya, 2001). Gangs are a major challenge for the Indian squatter settlers (Dass, 2014). These community are facing a lot of social issues but the most are from the gangsters in their living area. The youth in the squatter community lack stable employment, have poor incomes, and must resort to gangsterism to supplement their meagre salaries. Gang activities collapse the quality of living in the area. The occupants of the neighborhood claim that their issues may be addressed if the region is free of gangsterism (Dass, 2014).

According to Royal Malaysian Police (2021) as cited by Morgan (2020), the number of gangster cases involving Indian youths is increasing in Penang, 20 cases recorded in 2014 increased to 29 cases in 2018 with an increase of 68.97% and in 2019, there were 21 cases involved Indian youths as reported (RMP, 2021). Gangsterism is a string of other moral issues such as running away from home, theft, drug addiction, hangover and many other symptoms (Zaidi, 2014). Gang-affiliated Indian youths involved in gangsterism are no longer interested in education (Morgan, 2020). School teens who engage with gangs are constantly culpable of misbehavior that disrupts the educational process in schools added Morgan (2020). The study also revealed that most teenagers who join gangs quit school and get involved in gang operations to earn money and power (Morgan, 2020).

According to research conducted by Moorthy (2019), drug trafficking is a main activity of gang. Gangs play a crucial role in drug distribution and trafficking. The majority of gang members had sold narcotics, been engaged in gang brawls, assaulted individuals, and carried weapons (Moorthy, 2019).

### **1.2.2 History of Indian Immigrant to Malaysia**

In order to understand this study, it is vital to comprehend the history of the Indian population in Malaysia. Indian migration to Malaya (now Malaysia) was significant, particularly during the British colonial rule in Asia, which coincided with the expansion of the global economy in the second half of the nineteenth century (Lee, 2019).

In Malaysia, the term "Indian" refers to all people from the subcontinent, including Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Sri Lankans (Mahal, 2018). In the late nineteenth century, under the British ruling, Indians began migrating to Malaysia to serve as indentured laborers on plantation (Arokiam, 2019). Subsequent waves of migration from other parts of India and Sri Lanka were primarily for security, railway, and clerical services (Kuppuswamy, 2010).

Initially, Indians who migrated to Malaya were Tamils and Telugus who worked in plantations, construction and maintenance of transportation lines (roads and railways), and ports. North Indians, particularly Sikhs, were recruited for the police force and security services, whereas Malayalee's and Jaffna Tamils from Sri Lanka were engaged in administrative and subordinate civil service occupations (Aboo Talib, 2020). According to Sandhu (1967), 70.1% of the Indians who migrated to Malaya did so as labourers and 29.9% as merchants.

With the passage of time, they were able to assimilate into Malaysian society and culture while keeping their native tongue and religious beliefs and practices. As a minority group, Indians in Malaysia faced comparable challenges to those faced by other ethnic minorities in multicultural societies (Singh, 2013). As the country progressed, recording impressive economic growth rates in the early 1980s, Indian plantation villagers were left behind, becoming victims of the overall national development (Singh, 2013). Over the years, more than 300,000 poor Indian workers have been displaced as a result of plantations being acquired for property and township development (Studies, 2006).

Despite the large number of people forced to migrate from rural plantation areas to urban areas, authorities did little or nothing to provide skills training and resettle these communities in a more sustainable and improved livelihood (Anbalakan, 2003). Following independence, the Alliance government continued to prioritise the economic advancement of Malays in all its economic programmes (Anbalakan, 2003).

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was implemented in 1971, effectively imposing a regime of 'positive discrimination' for Malays in a variety of sectors ranging from education and business to the bureaucracy (Crouch, 1996). The two primary goals of the New Economic Policy (NEP) were for the abolition of poverty irrespective of race along with the restructuring of society to eliminate the identification of a race with its economic functions - a legacy of colonial times (Anbalakan, 2003). Later revisions, such as the New Development Plan (1991-2000) and the New Vision Policy (2000-2010), all aimed to promote the interests of the local Malay population.

Implementing the aforementioned policies and measures in favour of Malays entails, among other things, Malay dominance in the public sector, special privileges for Malays in the educational and economic realms, generous loans and scholarships for Malay students, promotion of Malay culture and religion,

and so on (Anbalakan, 2003). The policy's framers made it very clear that the NEP's main and major goal was to strengthen the economic position of the Bumiputera, which can be translated literally as "son of the land" or "son of soil: (Wiki, 2022) particularly the Malay community, by creating a commercial and industrial group among them in about twenty years (Anbalakan, 2003).

These Malay privileges implied discrimination against non-Malays in the business sector, reduced admission to higher education institutions, denial of scholarship, and a reduction in the space for the promotion of non-Malays' ethnic and cultural rights (Ramasamy, 2004).

There was no consideration of the plight faced by the Indians' or their future prospects. Worse, unlike the Malays, the Indians were not treated as a separate community (Anbalakan, 2003). Rather, they were lumped in with the Chinese, who were far more economically powerful, under the non-Bumiputera category. In short, while everything possible was promised to help the Bumiputera community, practically no strategy of any kind was devised to assist the poor Indians (Anbalakan, 2003).

As a result of the government's discriminatory policies and the displaced community's deplorable living conditions, many Indian youths have turned to illegal activities to support themselves (Studies, 2006).

As a result, the youth then, had to seek for jobs and they were mostly offered jobs by Chinese businessmen (RMP, 2021). They primarily worked as labourers. Gradually the Chinese used the Indian labourers to facilitate their gang activities (RMP, 2021). Consequently, the involvement of Indians in gangsterism began in the early 60's.

Chinese gang ideology has influenced Indians to join and attend swearing in ceremonies such as initiation ceremony and blood oath (RMP, 2021). The engagement of Indians and Chinese in gangsterism did not endure long since the interests of Indians were disregarded, and the Chinese prioritized making a profit (RMP, 2021).

Bentong Kali aka Kalimuthu son of M. Pakirisamy was the most deadly member of Gang 04, commanded by Thai Sing, a Chinese individual from Bentong, Pahang. Later Bentong Kali left and formed the Indian triad 'Gang 08'. Despite his house imprisonment, he formed his own triad known as 'Gang 36 Jalan Kelang Lama, Kuala Lumpur. Initially the Indian gangs were formed to accommodate the members' welfare and themselves too. But the involvement of Indians in this criminal phenomenon has provoked discontent among the gangs and as a result there has been a scramble for control of the areas for the purpose of illegal financial resources (RMP, 2021).

The emergence of gangsterism among Indians has become more systematic in recent years. The initiation procedure, the image of logos, the use of color, and the engraving of tattoos serve to establish the identity of a gang in Malaysia. These differences have also created an “*easily recognizable*” atmosphere. Gang 04, Gang 36, Gang 21, Gang 24, Gang 18, Gang 35, Gang Satu Hati (One Hearted) and Gang 303 are the formed and organized by Indian in Malaysia (RMP, 2021).

### 1.3 Problem Statement

The psychological, emotional, and intellectual lives of educators in Malaysia are complicated by a variety of competing demands. Not only are educators, especially those working in regions plagued by gang activity, barraged with constant change in the educational system, but they are also confronted with a problem that has a continuing impact on their professional lives. There is a clear deficiency in the amount of attention that is devoted to research that concentrate on the actual life experiences of gang members. As a result, there is still a need for more study on the everyday experiences of gang members. Keeping this in mind, the following questions pertaining to research were developed: a. What do the detainees understand about gangs? b) Why did the detainees join gangs? c) What is their life experience as a gang member?

Being a gang member is frowned upon by all civilized societies. There is little doubt that those who have become gangsters have suffered much as a consequence. Physical and emotional traumas remain for many. All too many people have lost loved ones. Despite individuals being aware of the disadvantages of becoming a gang member, data demonstrates that the proportion of ethnic Indians who are involved in gangs is surging (Durairaja, 2019).

Violent crime is in step with social progress; thus, the well-being of peaceful life is critical in Malaysia. Despite various measures, policies, and laws, such as the Prevention of Crime (Transfer and Extension Act 2014), Section 117 of the Criminal Procedure Code, Section 43 of the Establishment Act 1966, Section 385 of the Penal Code, Section 147 of the Penal Code, Criminal Prevention Act 1959, and Section 3 (3) of the Police Act 1967, gangsterism persists within the Indian community.

The scenario of gangsterism in Malaysia reveals that Indians are the most involved of all ethnic groups in Malaysia. According to the Penang Police Headquarters, the number of gangster cases involving Indian youths climbed from 20 in 2014 to 29 in 2018, a 68.97 percent increase. Evidently, up of May 2019, 21 cases have been documented (Morgan, 2020).



Previous studies have shown that gangsterism has spread to school students where, they were actively involved in gangsterism (Yahaya, 2001; Alagappar, 2010; Morgan, 2020). Police statistics from the police reveal that 52 youngsters aged 15 to 18 were brought before the magistrate's court for their participation in an illegal assembly in front of four Penang schools. Of which 42 were school students, nine of whom are school dropouts, and one college student (Mohd, 2017). In the Indian community, this is a major reason for worry, as many of their youth are selecting the wrong path and putting their lives and futures at risk. Thus, researching the phenomenon of gangsterism among Malaysian Indians is critical in light of this fact.

The existing literature on Indian gangsterism in Malaysia has revealed information relating to the demographic and sociological factors behind gangsterism (Durairaja, 2019). Psychological and Criminogenic factors from the perspective of ex gangsters and police personnel have also been explored by Durairaja, (2019). Furthermore, the involvement of school children in gangsterism has been studied by Prof. Azizi Yahaya, 2001; Alagappar, P (Alagappar, 2010), Prof Nataraja Moorthy (Moorthy, 2019) did a study about profile of Indian gangsters.

Identifying solutions to the problem of rising gang membership is critical. Gang involvement of Indian has become like a snowballing. The root causes of the issue must be identified in order for the gangs to stop or at least lowering their actions in the future. It is the author's opinion that insight from an individual who has participated in a gang can provide essential insights these dilemmas.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

This study is conducted mainly to understand the actual situation and life of the ethnic Indian gang members or more commonly known as Indian gangsters in Malaysia. It is also to explore and describe the key factors that influence Malaysian Indians to get involved in gangsterism. This study is also conducted to identify the solution in preventing Indians from joining gangs.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The research was relied on guided questions that may help to explore in depth about the involvement of Malaysian Indians in gangs and their life. It was based on three main questions as:

1. What do the detainees understand about gangs?
2. Why did the detainees join gangs?
3. What is their life experience as a gang member?

The purpose of this study is to investigate and explain the human experience of Indian gangsters who are detained in prison for gang related criminal activities. From these inquiries, the author aims to find the common themes and the essence of their experiences. The perceptions and descriptions of informants will focus the investigation upon a criminals' shared experiences. In addition, the purpose of the research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the texture and structure of the life of a gangster.

### **1.5.1 Objectives**

1. To find out the detainees' understanding about gangs.
2. To explore the factors that influence the detainees to join a gang.
3. To identify potential solutions to prevent Malaysian Indians from joining gangs.

### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

This study contributes to the knowledge in educational research by analysing individual narratives of being a gangster. This research is a personal attempt to comprehend the problem of gangsterism in Malaysia as well as the participation of Malaysian Indians. The study attempts to weave the individual and the contextual perspectives together to advance our understanding of the life of Indian gangsters and gangsterism in Malaysia.

Theoretically, the study forms a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to the involvement of Malaysian Indians in gangsterism. The study contributes towards theoretical explanations of the involvement of Indians in gangsterism as an individual from a different setting. From the practical perspective, the model and the theme that emerge from the finding serves as input for the design and facilitation of intervention for policy makers, non-government organizations and the society leaders.

It is to understand more about the roots and causes that lead Malaysian Indians that get involve in antisocial activities. Additionally, this study may give them a guideline to take necessary actions to prevent their involvement in criminal activities.

This study may serve as a guide for policymakers to identify the genuine causes that drive Indian youth to get engaged in gangsterism and develop policies that might aid or prevent them from developing this social sickness.

## **1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Research**

This study was done among Indian criminals who had participated in gang-related criminal activities and serving sentence in prison. It focused exclusively on these criminals' lives as informants.

Gangs and gangsterism are social ill that is found worldwide. There are gangs operate in as street gang to mafia level. This study also focuses on the culture that the gangsters practiced during their involvement in gangs.

## **1.8 Definition of terms**

### **1.8.1 Gang**

A gang is a group of people who, via the organisation, formation, and establishment of an assemblage, share a common identity and cause trouble and conflict with other groups, (Merriam Webster online dictionary, 2015). In currant usage gang typically denotes a criminal organization or a criminal affiliation (Ayling, 2011). The origin of the term gang derives from the past participle of Old English *'gan'*, meaning "to go". It is cognate with Old Norse *gangr*, meaning "journey". (Miller, 1975) has given the most complete definition of gang as a group of recurrently associating individuals with identifiable leadership and internal organization, identifying or claiming control over territory in the community and engaging either individually or collectively in violence or other illegal behaviours. Gangs vary in size in terms of their membership, ethnic composition, organizational structure, alliances, and types of criminal intent (Brantingham, 2012).

### **1.8.2 Gangster**

According to the Oxford dictionary, the term "Gangsters" can be defined as a member of a group of violent criminals. Gangster is a participant of an organized group or gang of violent criminals (Moorthy, 2019). A gangster is heavily involved in any violent or illegal activities.

### **1.8.3 Gangsterism**

Gangsterism is a group of individuals with a shared identity who collaborate in a clique on a reasonably frequent basis and whose behaviours society may see as righteous, unlawful, immoral, or a mix thereof (Spiegel, 1990). Gangsterism can be described as the use of tactics associated with gangsters, as intimidation or violence, in order to achieve a goal.

#### 1.8.4 Gang Culture

Gang culture is a way of life that includes patterns related to conduct and indoctrination, beliefs, traditions, values, language, art, skills and social and interpersonal relationships (Jill Dando Institute, 2005). Gang culture is a sub-culture formed by the gangs. Gangs create their own sub-culture to enable their members to identify the other members (Lee T. L., 2019). Gang members normally establish an identity with their own dress codes, tattoos, and slang (Jackson, 1996). The organization and structure are made by the gang leader. Gang culture also includes the aspects of leadership. A member of the gang who exhibits exceptional leadership abilities at a given time is chosen as leader.



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