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The burdens and management of casual street gangsterism from the police experience in Ethiopia

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Abstract: There is no consensus and common ground among scholars toward defining the concept of gangsterism. The type and nature of the so-called gang groups are also stated differently in the existing literature. The aim of this study is to explore the incidence and management of street gangs in two selected Ethiopian cities. A cross-sectional, descriptive mixed research design was implemented to investigate the issue at hand. Purposive sampling is used to recruit the participants. For primary data, focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews are implemented, and for secondary data, police records are accessed and reviewed. A total of five FGDs and 35 in-depth interviews (15 from Jimma and 20 from Addis Ababa) have been carried out. The findings of the study indicated that street gangsterism, though not organized in a sophisticated manner, is a widespread urban problem in Ethiopia. Secondary data obtained from the Addis Ababa police commission portray that crime typologies typical for street gangsters are highly prevalent. The immediate causes of street gangsterism are highly linked with a lack of resources to sustain one's living at the individual level. Family disintegration and faulty socialization at the meso level and meager political-economy policies of the country at structural level are also risk factors for street gangsterism. Street criminals used newly emerging modus operandi including ginter (deceiving), haya sost (the 23), shuashua (swindling), gichit (collusion), and entif (spitting) to commit crimes against property and related offenses. Addressing existing problems requires unreserved commitment and effort of everyone at the individual, community, and system level.

Subjects: Crime Control - Criminology; Environmental Criminology; Sociology; Urban Sociology; Criminology and Criminal Justice; Criminology & Delinquency

Keywords: Gangsterism; Police experience; Property crime; Modus operandi; Community policing

1. Introduction

Endeavors to establish common ground on the definition of a gang suffer from a major dilemma and lack of consensus among scholars (Wesel, 2002). However, for this study, a gang is an organization of two or more individuals who form an alliance for a common purpose; the gang identifies with and claims a territory in the community and engages individually or collectively in violence and other criminal activity (Pacheco, 2010). The type and nature of the so-called gang groups are stated differently by different scholars. There is no agreement in the classification of gang groups (Pitts, 2007; Winterdyk & Ruddell, 2010; Densely, 2012). Street gangs, prison gangs, organized criminals, rebel insurgents, and radical and extremist groups might differ in their aims,
structures, size, and local constraints, but they all share the same organizational problem; the need to find trustworthy, loyal, and competent members under the conditions of illegality, use of violence, risk of infiltration, and involvement in criminal activities. The literature on street gangs, in particular, relies upon the antecedents of gang membership, known as pull and push factors, to explain why certain individuals join gangs, while others do not (Densley, 2012).

Among the various categories of gangs, the interest of this study is that of street gangs. Street gangs are generally considered distinct from organized criminal enterprises because they typically lack the hierarchical leadership structure, organizational structure, capital, and manpower required to run a sophisticated criminal enterprise (Franco, 2007, November). Franco further articulates the structure and operation of street gangs as follows:

Street gangs are generally more horizontally organized, with lots of small cliques with their own leadership, and no centralized, overarching leadership setting strategy and enforcing discipline. Street gangs often engage in some of the same types of criminal activity as organized criminal enterprises, but generally at much lower levels and not always strictly driven by entrepreneurial objectives. Research indicates that most street gang crime tends to be opportunistic and improvised as well as loosely organized. (Franco, 2007, November, p. 7)

Street gangs and city violence like vagrancy have existed throughout recorded history across world societies (Thornberry et al., 2003). Prevalence of vagrancy in a given city neighborhood is considered the determinant variable making the crime statistics high and affecting public safety. Since the earliest days of gang research, such as the classic study of gangs in Chicago conducted by Thrasher (1927) as cited in Thornberry et al. (2003), scholars have noted that gang members and violence in cities enormously make the level of crime high in society. Indeed, the observation that gang members, as compared with other youths, are more extensively involved in delinquency, especially serious and violent delinquencies, is perhaps the most robust and consistent observations in criminological research. Street gangs and violence are interwoven terms that evoke concern, if not fear, throughout the population (Ebensen et al., 2010).

Nowadays, gangsterism has become a term familiar even to rural residents who have never ventured into gang-infested urban centers. Importantly, the increase in gang violence was quite real (Jütersonke et al., 2009). The wellness of a given state matters in their communities and influences decisions that individuals make, and the choices that are available to them when faced with hardships, violence-related trauma, and socioeconomic crises. The individual has been shaped by his or her culture and people’s community history influenced the individual’s decision to become a gangster (Daniels & Adams, 2010). To engage with gangsterism, only as a criminal entity, is to miss its complexity as a social and cultural phenomenon.

Even though gangsterism as a social phenomenon has long featured in world societies, its growth and influence are unprecedented (Jütersonke et al., 2009). In an effort to deal with them, policymakers have sought to link gangs with the spectacular rise in urban violence and disorder more generally. Accusations range from homicides, muggings, theft, and intimidation, to rape, racketeering, extortion, kidnapping, and the narcotic trade. Likewise, international observers are increasingly linking gangs to insurrection and internal conflict in so-called weak and fragile states (Jütersonke et al., 2009). Street gangs facilitate and pave the way for the widespread occurrence of insecurity and violence as well as for the breeding of other multidimensional criminal activities in a given society.

Historically, gang research has been characterized by ethnographic examinations providing invaluable information based on in-depth interviews and observations. Thus, so far, most of the studies on gangsterism as a social phenomenon are qualitative exploration of the life of gangsters from an emic perspective and largely found in advanced societies (Ebensen et al., 2010). Moreover, in advanced western societies, different types and problems of gangs have been explored. There is also a burgeoning the literature regarding the problem in developing nations.
The issue of gangsterism is an emerging research area in the African context. Gang studies have been well established in the global north but gained momentum only in the last two decades in the African setting. It is worth mentioning the works of notable scholars who laid the foundation for African gang studies. Among others, Don Pinnock pioneered gang studies in Africa with his first seminar book Brotherhoods, published in 1984. Next, in Gang rituals and rites of passage (1997), Pinnock explored the socializing role that Cape Flat gangs contributed to poorly educated, young-colored males by providing a sense of attachment and meaning in a situation epitomized by family disintegration, poverty, and violence. Pinnock culminated his contribution to the issue through the publication of Gangtown (2016), which is considered a watershed moment in the development of gang studies in Africa. Among other things, Pinnock discussed the peculiar aspects of gangs in African settings by demonstrating the interplay between agency and social structure in the incidence of gang groups. In particular, the social exclusion and marginalization existing in mainstream social structure engenders vulnerabilities of people in low socioeconomic positions to embrace gang lifestyle as the viable alternative and the agency gangs assume would in turn have repercussions on broader society.

In his book The Number: One man’s search for identity in the cape underworld and prison gangs Steinberg (2004) narrates the story of one man while in the process shedding light on social and historical processes facilitating the engagement of people to gang lifestyle. Steinberg stressed the role of the apartheid system in general and prison institutions in particular for the expansion of gangsterism in urban South Africa.

Recently, Honwana (2013), revealed that in many African countries, where the economy is underperforming and corruption is rampant, youths engaged in violent criminal offenses as participating in such activities provide possible ways to survive. The pervasiveness of violent youth networks facilitated the establishment of organized groups among youth as they eventually ended dispersed and unstructured social and political acts. In Ethiopia, street gangs are named Adegegna Bozene in Amharic language which is the current working language. The Vagrancy Control Proclamation was introduced in 2004 in Ethiopia as a response to the time-to-time increase and wide spread of vagrancy and the threat to tranquility and order of the people it posed (Vagrancy Control Proclamation, 2004).

There have been practices of mobilizing the community to maintain peace and prevent crime in some African countries. The Nyumba Kumi initiative in Kenya, primarily established to help reduce the prevalence of criminal incidence and monitor overall community activities, is mentioned as a signature movement of community policing and neighborhood efforts in crime control in Africa (Ndona, Muthama, and Muigua 2019). The Nyumba Kumi community policing approach participates people from the public as well as the private sector, but due to the lack of well-defined structures and guidelines on the Nyumba Kumi, there is a lot of confusion regarding the membership, roles, and responsibilities of the local community in crime control. On the contrary, Ethiopian community policing is basically embedded within the formal government structure and works closely with the local community in the management of criminal activities.

Criminological studies are among the highly overlooked areas in Ethiopia, both by domestic and scholars from abroad. One rarely found national study on crime situations in Ethiopia at least for the last 25 years. Andargachew Tesfaye analyzed national patterns and trends of crime in Ethiopia as of 1957/78 to 1987/88 with missing crime data for several years during the Derg revolution (Tesfaye, 1984). However, there have been some attempts made in this regard by few researchers since recently. In his study, Wondimu (2004), analyzed crime situations in the country, which dealt with geographical distribution of crime in Addis Ababa. In addition, Nega and Berhanu (2014) have also made an overall crime situation analysis in the Oromia region of Ethiopia based on 2011/12 police data from the region. In their study, Nega and Berhanu found that violent crime is the leading crime type in Oromia. Generally, these few studies indicate that criminological research deserves much more attention both at national and regional levels in Ethiopia.
Even though street gangsterism falls under violent crimes, the crime list used by the police in Ethiopia is missing the name. Yet occurrences similar to street gangsterism are observed and reported in different parts of Ethiopia, particularly in urban centers. Another indicator of the rampancy of street gangsterism is Vagrancy Control Proclamation number 384 of 2004 in Ethiopia. Therefore, the Government of Ethiopia is aware of the prevalence of vagrancy in major towns of the country, which may be later transformed, join and formulate sophisticated street gangs, and drafted a proclamation to control its further development. Despite this effort, an ample number of cases and sad stories have been heard from media and police about the stressfulness of the problem of street gangs in major towns in the country. However, there is no adequate literature concerning gangsterism as a social phenomenon in the context of developing countries like Ethiopia. As a result, it is hardly possible to get substantiated empirical studies in Ethiopia concerning the problem of street gangsterism. This study has been conducted to narrow or/and fill the existing knowledge gap on the issue at hand. The study aimed to investigate the burden of street gangsters and the responses from the concerned stakeholders to manage the incidence of the problem.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

1. There are many schools of thought regarding the causation of crime. However, this specific study was guided and discussed in relation to the social disorganization theory of crime causation. Thus, the theoretical framework employed in this study is social disorganization theory.

1.2. Social Disorganization Theory

The origins of social disorganization theory date back to the early 1900s. In 1929, two researchers from the University of Chicago, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, began a series of studies using official records, which showed that in the city of Chicago, the rates of delinquency, criminality, and commitment to correctional institutions varied markedly by area. In particular, rates were highest in slums near the city center and diminished as distance from the center of the city increased, except in areas of industry and commerce just outside of the Central District, which had some of the highest rates. Shaw and McKay also found that rates of crime and delinquency exhibited a remarkably consistent patterning over many decades; in particular, the spatial pattern of rates revealed significant long-term stability even though the national structure of the population in the inner-city areas changed greatly over time. Shaw and McKay thus determined that crime and delinquency were not the result of personal characteristics of the residents who lived in the neighborhoods but were tied to the neighborhoods themselves. Since areas of high and low crime and delinquency maintained their relative positions over many years, a key theoretical task became to explain the existence and stability of these area differentials over time.

A fundamental part of their explanation involved the concept of social disorganization. Social disorganization refers to the inability of a community to realize the common values of its members and maintain effective social controls. As Kornhauser describes, “Social disorganization exists in the first instance when the structure and culture of a community are incapable of implementing and expressing the values of its own residents.” (Kornhauser, 1978, p. 63) According to the theory, a common value among neighborhood residents is the desire for a crime-free community. In essence, then, socially disorganized neighborhoods are ineffective in combating crime.

A socially organized community is characterized by (1) solidarity or an internal consensus on essential norms and values (e.g., residents want and value the same things, such as a crime-free neighborhood); (2) cohesion, or a strong bond among neighbors (e.g., residents know and like one another); and (3) integration, with social interaction occurring on a regular basis (e.g., residents spend time with one another). Conversely, a disorganized community has little solidarity among residents and lacks social cohesion or integration. Perhaps, the greatest difference between socially organized and disorganized neighborhoods is the level of informal social control in those neighborhoods. Informal social control is defined as the scope of collective intervention that the community directs toward local problems, including crime (Kornhauser, 1978; Shaw & McKay,
It is the informal, non-official actions taken by residents to combat crime in their communities, such as, for example, when residents question persons about suspicious activity or admonish misbehaving youth and inform parents of their children’s misconduct. In essence, residents act as the “eyes and ears” of the community and their informal surveillance, and even simple presence, deter others from engaging in crime. According to theory, socially disorganized neighborhoods have lower levels of informal social control and thus experience higher crime rates when compared to more socially organized neighborhoods.

Ecological characteristics of neighborhoods influence the degree of social disorganization in the community. This is because certain characteristics can impede the development of social ties that promote the ability to solve common problems, including crime. Ecological characteristics of greatest interest to social disorganization researchers include poverty, joblessness, population mobility or turnover, racial composition, and family disruption, among others. Although community characteristics such as poverty or residential instability are related to crime, these factors themselves do not directly cause crime, according to the theory. That is, ecological characteristics are related to crime only indirectly through various neighborhood processes, such as informal social control. As such, poverty, residential instability, and other ecological characteristics are important in as much as they affect the mediating processes of social disorganization.

In light of the above discussion, the basic social disorganization causal model can be expressed as follows: neighborhood characteristics → social ties → informal social control → crime. Sampson describes the processes by which neighborhood characteristics and crime are associated: neighborhood characteristics such as family disorganization, residential mobility, and structural density weaken informal social control networks; informal social controls are impeded by weak local social bonds, lowered community attachment and anonymity, and reduced capacity for surveillance and guardianship; other factors such as poverty and racial composition also probably affect informal control, although their influence is in all likelihood indirect; residents in areas characterized by family disorganization, mobility, and building density are less able to perform guardianship activities, less likely to report general deviance to authorities, to intervene in public disturbances, and to assume responsibility for supervision of youth activities; the result is that deviance is tolerated and public norms of social control are not effective (Sampson, 1987, p. 109).

2. Materials and Methods
The area of the study was delimited to Addis Ababa city and Jimma town. Addis Ababa was selected among other towns of the country as it is the capital of the country and the existence of many diversified groups and ethnic classes of the country in relation to the others. On the other hand, Jimma was selected because of its vicinity to Jimma University, an institution that sponsored the research, and the main center of the university’s community service provision.

Mixed research approach has been used. Through qualitative research, the researchers tried to generate a more detailed view of the situation, getting closer to the police perspectives aimed at developing as full understanding of the situation as possible. Through a quantitative approach, data from police reports and records were analyzed. Cross-sectional, descriptive research design has been implemented to conduct the study. The data were collected from January to April 2016 both from primary and secondary sources. The secondary data of the study was addressed through analyzing police records. The secondary data from crimes known to the police record for 5 years, from 2010 to 2015, was considered as a source of information for crimes committed by the street gangsters in Addis Ababa. The secondary information about 10 violent and property-related crimes in which the involvement of street gangsters is most likely according to the informants of qualitative studies is included to exhibit the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of criminals and the prevalence of street gangsterism in the study areas.

Primary data were collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), conducted with selected community policing officers and crime prevention and
investigation police officers concerning their experience with the issue. The experience of the police was found to provide immensely rich qualitative information about the dynamics of casual street gangsters in Addis Ababa city and Jimma town. Audio recording was used to capture information acquired from interviewees.

purposive sampling technique has been implemented to select the participants of the study. Accordingly, a total of 35 in-depth interviews (15 from Jimma and 20 from Addis Ababa) have been carried out. A total of 5 FGDs were conducted. From Jimma town, 2 FGDs with 8 (2 females, 6 males) and 9 (all male) participants have been carried out. The first FGD with 8 participants were recruited from the community policing bureau, while the second FGD with 9 participants were drawn from the police stations of Jimma town. Three of the FGDs in Addis Ababa have 8, 9, and 10 participants each. The first FGD participants were all female gender and community policing officers in profession. The remaining two FGDs have only male participants from the community policing bureau of Sebategna and Lideta sub-city areas. In order to generate more reliable and detailed vigorous data for the study, participants of the study have been recruited based on preset inclusion criteria. Accordingly, from respective police departments of the study areas, only seasond police officers from crime investigation and control departments with sub-specialty division of street crime, who have a minimum of 10-year firm work experience, have been invited for in-depth interviews.

The obtained data from participants were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques. In the process, the researchers followed every data collection by analyzing it concurrently. That is, the researchers started a qualitative data analysis process immediately after data were collected. After field works have been completed, the collected data from potential respondents are transcribed according to their order of categories. On the other hand, the secondary data gained from police records and reports were also analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. Consequently, the data were interpreted to reach the stage of the findings of the study. In due process of assuring the ethical issue of the study, all possible mechanisms of preserving the interest, privacy, and free will of the participants so as not to disclose the information in a way that violates the principles of confidentiality. Every research process undertaken by the research team to conduct the study has been carried out with direct supervision by Jimma University College of Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Ethical Review Board, a body which also fully approved the final report of the study.

As the study is only limited on the police officers’ perspective to explore the burden and management of casual street gangsterism from the study areas, the findings of the study lack the general perspectives of wider community, and the lived experiences and perceptions of victims of street gangsterism, and the street gangsters on the issue at hand. Moreover, the secondary data from police reports used for this study may not be reliable enough to speak of all the behaviors and manifestations of street gangsters. This is because police-recorded crimes are used by police forces to document community differences in crime and design spatially targeted strategies. Nevertheless, crimes known to police are affected by selection biases driven by underreporting (Buil-Gil et al., 2021). Moreover, the percentage of crimes unknown to police varies widely across small areas, underestimating the prevalence of crime in certain places while overestimating it in others (Buil-Gil et al. 2021).

3. Findings

3.1. Prevalence of Street Gangsterism
The fast-paced urbanization process of developing countries like Ethiopia is accompanied by a high rate of urban-based crimes committed by street gangsters. The commonplace street gangsterism in the major towns of the country is a liability to the sustainable development of the country and safety of the urban community. The study revealed that although armed bandits, sed to rob the properties of farmers during day or night shifts, are not new for rural Ethiopian societies since
antiquity, the urban-based street gangsters with innovative criminal activities are inflicting widespread damages recently. The secondary data obtained from the Addis Ababa police commission, indicated in the following table, portrays that the crime typologies typical for street gangsters of Addis Ababa are highly prevalent. Moreover, there is an increase in the trend of some criminal activities like fraud and use of hypotonic and anesthetic drugs to take the properties and possessions of others after they lose their consciousness, which nowadays is a common criminal activity of street gangsters. Thus, street gangsterism, though not organized in a sophisticated manner, is the widespread urban problem of the country. Table 1

In some crime cases, the prevalence seems declining and the most prolific justification for this is the introduction of community policing strategy. According to informants of the study, one of the enigmas which triggered the commencement of community policing strategy was the increase in magnitude of street gangsterism in urban centers. There are commonly known neighborhoods in Addis Ababa as a result of their street gangsters. For these reasons, Addis Ababa is recalled by the rural community for its robbers and thefts that used to fraud the countryside individuals in different ways. The thieves and robbers are known to each other and formed street gangsterism networks to facilitate their criminal activities. In a nutshell, street gangsters are part and parcel of urban communities in general and in the towns of industrializing countries, like Ethiopia, in particular.

One informant from Addis Ketema sub-town community policing bureau noted the following regarding the prevalence of street gangsterism:

Street gangsters are widespread in the corridors of Addis Ketema sub-town. Before the introduction of community policing it was unthinkable to go in and out safely in one’s village. The gangsters were known for robbery and hanging in the neighborhood and they were playing hide and seek with the police officers. Street gangs hideout in the neighborhood at the daytime in video houses and khat-marijuana houses. They access all the substances illegally through their network and they think over the tactics as well as the means of getting property to satisfy their needs. The community did not trust and were not closer with the police officers.

| Type of Crime | Total Number of Crimes Known To The Police Each Year |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|              | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Producing and circulating counterfeit money | 79 | 58 | 52 | 41 | 39 |
| Murder and non-negligent manslaughter | 153 | 149 | 176 | 165 | 102 |
| Assault | 13,269 | 15,012 | 16,717 | 15,469 | 12,991 |
| Arson | 124 | 139 | 185 | 173 | 190 |
| Robbery | 2766 | 2679 | 2500 | 1696 | 1433 |
| Burglary | 2202 | 1229 | 925 | 693 | 615 |
| Pocket picking | 1584 | 1672 | 1611 | 1525 | 1045 |
| Motor vehicle and apparatus theft | 2111 | 2336 | 1689 | 1277 | 1203 |
| Fraud | 2570 | 2787 | 2933 | 2674 | 2734 |
| Use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs | 356 | 349 | 390 | 422 | 502 |

Source: Addis Ababa Police Commission, March 2016
| Type of Crime                      | Socio-economic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | Years |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
|                                   | Sex | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
| Producing or circulating counterfeit money | Male | 94     | 82     | 59     | 42     | 41     |
|                                   | Female | 6     | 2     | 2     | 4     | 5     |
|                                   | Total | 100   | 84     | 61     | 46     | 46     |
| Murder and non-negligent manslaughter | Male | 186   | 180   | 202   | 155   | 95     |
|                                   | Female | 12   | 14     | 7     | 10     | 4     |
|                                   | Total | 198   | 194   | 209   | 165   | 99     |
| Assault                           | Male | 15,029 | 16,912 | 18,669 | 17,535 | 14,720 |
|                                   | Female | 1892   | 2180   | 2332   | 1978   | 1967   |
|                                   | Total | 16,921 | 19,092 | 21,001 | 19,513 | 16,687 |
| Arson                             | Male | 46     | 58     | 77     | 57     | 61     |
|                                   | Female | 11   | 13     | 9     | 11     | 9     |
|                                   | Total | 57     | 71     | 86     | 68     | 70     |
| Robbery                           | Male | 3582   | 3874   | 3797   | 3010   | 2441   |
|                                   | Female | 8   | 9     | 4     | 15     | 11     |
|                                   | Total | 3590   | 3883   | 3801   | 3025   | 2452   |
| Burglary                          | Male | 881   | 735   | 653   | 626   | 521   |
|                                   | Female | 7   | 4     | 4     | 12     | 8     |
|                                   | Total | 888   | 739   | 657   | 638   | 529   |
| Pocket picking                    | Male | 1720   | 1656   | 1832   | 1660   | 1179   |
|                                   | Female | 12   | 16     | 25     | 61     | 16     |
|                                   | Total | 1732   | 1672   | 1857   | 1721   | 1195   |
| Motor vehicle and equipment theft | Male | 1616   | 1430   | 1428   | 1183   | 1203   |
|                                   | Female | 7   | 3     | 1     | 6     | 2     |
|                                   | Total | 1623   | 1433   | 1429   | 1189   | 1205   |
| Fraud                             | Male | 2810   | 3011   | 3252   | 3049   | 3106   |
|                                   | Female | 352   | 348   | 460   | 328   | 270   |
|                                   | Total | 3162   | 3359   | 3712   | 3377   | 3376   |
| Use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs | Male | 410   | 450   | 478   | 516   | 613   |
|                                   | Female | 7   | 7     | 11     | 10     | 16     |
|                                   | Total | 417   | 457   | 489   | 526   | 629   |

Source: Addis Ababa Police Commission, March 2016
previously. In the aftermath of the commencement of community policing, the interaction and cooperation between the community and police becomes stronger. The pilot project of community policing in Ethiopia was started for the first time in Addis Ketema sub-town. The area was selected because of the abundance of street gangsters who were damaging the healthy functioning of the community more than any other parts of Addis Ababa city. But immediately after the inauguration of the community policing program, the problem of street gangsterism has shown a moderate decline as a result of the interventions and operations of the community policing officers closely with the community members (Male, 29).

The prevalence of street gangsterism, though exhibited a moderate decline since the inauguration of the community policing program, has continued as a serious challenge in urban centers around the country. The street gangsters shifted their criminal activities from robbing money to snatching electronics machines like smartphones and laptop computers. The prevalence of street gangsterism is entertained as a result of the physical-socio-economic factors of the urban community in particular and the Ethiopian society in general. The physical set-up of some sub-towns is more vulnerable to being filled with street gangsters. The informants of the Addis Ketema police station seconded this as follows:

Addis Ketema sub-town is the sub-city with the largest open market (Merkato) and the cross country bus station in which almost all travelers from the different corridors of the country arrive on their first visit of Addis Ababa. Thus, the geographical strategic location of the sub-town is the enigma behind the prevalence of street gangs. The presence of street gangsterism in Addis Ketema sub-town is inevitable partly due to the physical location of the sub-town (male, 33).

The physical environment is found to be an enabling factor in the rampancy of street gangsterism. Nature and type of neighborhoods are also determinants of the prevalence of street gangs in the study area. Most of the time, neighborhoods with large numbers of newly arrived immigrants attract gangs and are suitable areas for the operation of street gangsters as they take advantage of heterogeneity and lose social bonds in these areas. People living in rural areas and towns outside Addis Ababa developed a fear of coming to Addis Ababa for the first time, partly because of the presence of street gangsters and victim stories they heard about the practice from those who had experienced it previously. An in-depth interview informant endorsed this assertion as follows:

The street gangs are found and operating in our sub-city. The physical location of the sub-town and the neighborhoods are contributing to the widespread existence of street gangs. The immediate arrival for the newly immigrants is this sub-town. The cross country bus station is found in this sub-town and it is one big cause for the prevalence of street gangs in my understanding (Male, 43).

3.2. Urban Neighborhoods with High Prevalence of Street Gangsters

The neighborhoods known by the police in Addis-Ketema sub-city are also identified. The economic activities and the social interaction flow in the area create a favorable environment for the street gangsters. Social fabrics are found to be low in such areas as a result of bustling and hustling economic transactions and the heterogeneity of the population in such areas. Potential street gangsters are also encouraged to start their criminal activities in these neighborhoods. The condition of Addis-Ketema sub-city was highlighted by one informant as follows:

The street gangs were producing insecurity and unrest in the sub-town before the commencement of community policing. Now, there is a slight decline in the volume of crime committed by the street gangsters. The migrant vagrants of the countryside are the primary candidates of being street gangsters. The school dropouts and countryside migrants used to be involved in street Gangsterism as it is considered as the most ready-made job opportunity for youths of such background. The cross country bus station is creating the fertile ground for the abundance of street gangsters. Besides, the likes of neighborhoods of Goma tera, Somali
teras, bomb teras, sebategna, mesalemiya, shera tera, and the other corridors of the sub-town were scary for the inhabitants to walk alone let alone the night shift, but also in the day time year’s back. Now as result of the extensive and intensive patrolling and community policing these areas are not as scary as the previous time (Male, 38).

An in-depth interview with informants from the Jimma town of woreda, one police station, also seconded the heterogeneity of urban residents as a factor in the prevalence of street gangsterism as follows:

As we know Jimma is a big city with a high number of residents living in. These residents are a combination of in-migrant from different nations and nationalities of the country. These young vagrants spend most of their time on the street, in shisha houses, live on the street... main feature of these vagrants is smoking mastiish during the night, high volume of them is found around the bus station. The chemicals found in the mastiish energize and initiate them to undertake this anti-social act (Male, 29).

Another informant from Jimma town woreda one police station tried to identify and justify the street gangster’s prone neighborhoods and the suitability of the areas in as follows:

Around the bus station is the mostly cited area in our town where crimes are actively and repetitively committed. Kochi and Bocho-bore kebeles are also the next crime prone neighborhoods. This is because of the existence of high population movements like, passengers, business men/women... etc. In other words, these places are areas where anyone can find different peoples from all social classes and it’s their transaction, especially around the bus station is the most crowded area where the criminal easily can operate their mission (Male, 35).

The interaction between geographic location of sub-towns, population size, and social composition are considered factors for the high prevalence of street gangsterism in some sub-towns of the study area. One informant addresses this as “Among the six kebeles of the Woreda Hulet Police Office, Bocho-Bore Kebele is a highly crime zone. The reason is that the bus station is located there and has high population movement. So this kebele is the number one crime zone even at Jimma town level” (Male, 32). Another informant also seconded this as follows:

Bocho-bore kebele is more suitable for committing crime. The geographic landscape of this kebele is a wide and highly populated area. Based on our experience, population numbers and levels of committing crimes have positive relationships. Which means as the population number of a given place increases it opens an opportunity for different crimes to be committed (Male, 37).

Besides bocho-bore and Kochi neighborhoods, other street gang crime prone areas were also identified. Accordingly, one informant added that “neighborhoods found around active business centers like Merkato, Sar-sefer, and Bosa Kitto are potential street gangsterism favored areas in Jimma town” (Male, 27).

In Addis Ababa city, street gangsters’ crime prone neighborhoods are identified, and a great deal of attention is given by the police commission to dismantle the street gangsters from the city. However, in Jimma town also, the crime prone neighborhoods are identified; there is no special attention has been given to these areas to control the rampancy of street gangsterism in the town. All sub-towns are treated equally, which in turn should encourage the multiplicity of street gangsters in the area. Regardless of all efforts, the problem of crime in general and street gangsterism in particular is a challenge for contemporary urban residents of developing nations like Ethiopia. One informant discussed the pervasive prevalence of crime as follows:

Well, what we have to know here is that crime is an inevitable social phenomena. This means anyone can find crime anywhere where there is a social life, society, peoples and human beings in general.
| Type of Crime                     | Socioeconomic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | Years          |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|                                  | Age Group                                                 | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
| Producing or circulating counterfeit money | ≥ 15                                                      | 2      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
|                                  | 16–30                                                     | 63     | 56     | 45     | 21     | 36     |
|                                  | 31–50                                                     | 15     | 18     | 16     | 18     | 14     |
|                                  | Above 50                                                  | 1      | 7      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
|                                  | Total                                                     | 91     | 81     | 61     | 39     | 50     |
| Murder and non-negligent manslaughter | ≥ 15                                                      | 1      | 0      | 2      | 0      | 0      |
|                                  | 16–30                                                     | 119    | 75     | 15     | 83     | 54     |
|                                  | 31–50                                                     | 42     | 18     | 15     | 73     | 41     |
|                                  | Above 50                                                  | 3      | 20     | 27     | 1      | 3      |
|                                  | Total                                                     | 165    | 181    | 127    | 157    | 98     |
| Assault                          | ≥ 15                                                      | 141    | 145    | 116    | 104    | 143    |
|                                  | 16–30                                                     | 11,088 | 10,649 | 11,324 | 12,310 | 6278   |
|                                  | 31–50                                                     | 2686   | 821    | 6051   | 4325   | 4670   |
|                                  | Above 50                                                  | 590    | 576    | 760    | 743    | 898    |
|                                  | Total                                                     | 14,505 | 12,182 | 18,251 | 17,482 | 11,989 |
| Arson                           | ≥ 15                                                      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 1      |
|                                  | 16–30                                                     | 50     | 48     | 48     | 52     | 38     |
|                                  | 31–50                                                     | 5      | 4      | 28     | 13     | 12     |
|                                  | Above 50                                                  | 0      | 6      | 4      | 2      | 2      |
|                                  | Total                                                     | 55     | 58     | 80     | 85     | 53     |
| Robbery                         | ≥ 15                                                      | 9      | 40     | 17     | 15     | 16     |
|                                  | 16–30                                                     | 2313   | 1965   | 2180   | 645    | 1317   |
|                                  | 31–50                                                     | 191    | 6      | 399    | 138    | 289    |
|                                  | Above 50                                                  | 2      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 1      |
|                                  | Total                                                     | 2515   | 2011   | 2596   | 798    | 1623   |
| Type of Crime                            | Socioeconomic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                         | Age Group                                                  |        |        |        |        |        |
|                                         | ≥ 15                                                       | 1      | 2      | 4      | 3      | 0      |
|                                         | 16-30                                                      | 776    | 518    | 463    | 448    | 312    |
|                                         | 31-50                                                      | 83     | 18     | 121    | 108    | 154    |
|                                         | Above 50                                                   | 1      | 4      | 8      | 3      | 17     |
|                                         | Total                                                      | 861    | 542    | 596    | 562    | 483    |
|                                         | Pocket                                                     |        |        |        |        |        |
|                                         | ≥ 15                                                       | 19     | 34     | 26     | 18     | 59     |
|                                         | 16-30                                                      | 1294   | 1190   | 1227   | 1041   | 914    |
|                                         | 31-50                                                      | 237    | 287    | 315    | 279    | 142    |
|                                         | Above 50                                                   | 3      | 19     | 7      | 83     | 0      |
|                                         | Total                                                      | 31,553 | 1530   | 1575   | 1421   | 1115   |
|                                         | Motor vehicle and equipment theft                          |        |        |        |        |        |
|                                         | ≥ 15                                                       | 53     | 55     | 30     | 17     | 13     |
|                                         | 16-30                                                      | 1376   | 1064   | 1030   | 847    | 832    |
|                                         | 31-50                                                      | 125    | 287    | 208    | 305    | 214    |
|                                         | Above 50                                                   | 1      | 0      | 5      | 12     | 4      |
|                                         | Total                                                      | 1555   | 1406   | 1273   | 1181   | 1063   |
|                                         | Fraud                                                      |        |        |        |        |        |
|                                         | ≥ 15                                                       | 2      | 1      | 17     | 2      | 2      |
|                                         | 16-30                                                      | 1546   | 1498   | 1771   | 1741   | 1711   |
|                                         | 31-50                                                      | 768    | 928    | 972    | 988    | 995    |
|                                         | Above 50                                                   | 104    | 160    | 205    | 74     | 88     |
|                                         | Total                                                      | 2524   | 2587   | 2965   | 2805   | 2796   |
|                                         | Use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs                       |        |        |        |        |        |
|                                         | ≥ 15                                                       | 0      | 5      | 0      | 0      | 1      |
|                                         | 16-30                                                      | 370    | 360    | 381    | 461    | 469    |
|                                         | 31-50                                                      | 39     | 75     | 76     | 44     | 116    |
|                                         | Above 50                                                   | 0      | 0      | 1      | 0      | 1      |
|                                         | Total                                                      | 409    | 440    | 458    | 505    | 587    |
No matter how strong are the existence of systems and mechanisms to control and reduce the problem to the lower point, the crime problem persists in our society. So, yes of course there are crimes committed on the street by street youth vagrants in our wereda. But, the patterns, severity and frequency of occurrence spatially distributed which differs from time to time, from place to place and from neighborhood to neighborhood (Male, 43).

The issue of street gangsterism, previously a mushrooming problem in urban centers of the country, has been slightly declining as a result of governmental intervention strategies. Yet the problem remains the least in terms of the attention given to mitigate from the rest of the stakeholders. Consequently, the prevalence of street gangsterism persists in urban centers and it is one of the challenges of contemporary Ethiopian societies, as it pervades the antisocial behaviors by eroding the hardworking and other strict normative principles of the urban communities.

3.3. Risk Factors of Street Gangsterism

People join street gangsterism as a means of livelihood as a result of different risk factors. The immediate causes of street gangsterism are highly linked with lack of resources and money to sustain one’s living. In a nutshell, risk factors could range from mezzo-level family problems to structural-level political-economy policies in the country. The basic pushing and pulling factors of street gangsterism are highly linked and analogous to the pushing and pulling factors of the lifelong problem of the nation, i.e., rural-urban migration. In line with this one in-depth interview, the informant tried to identify the pushing and pulling factors of street gangsterism saying, “Some of the pushing factors are poverty, unemployment, low-income family background, and the pulling factors includes getting rich in terms of money in illegal ways without paying much efforts with simple energy attracts youths to commit the crime.”

Once youths join street gangs and start committing crime, there are reinforcing factors that enable street gangs and vagrants to retain their behavior for a long period of time. One informant endorsed this as follows:

After entering into such illegal acts and antisocial behavior certain factors obligated street gangs to sustain their behavior of committing the crime. For example, to get energized so as to commit the crime the vagrants use different hallucinating drugs and chemicals to avoid fear of committing crime. In the long run they became addicted to these drugs unconditionally by default. Like chewing chat, smoking cigarettes, consuming marijuana . . . etc. Since they have no interest and other ways of source of income to get things they are addicted to, the only thing they think they can do is to stay in this antisocial behavior (Male, 42).

The faulty socialization of children and the parenting style of the family are the other risk factors leading children to join street gangsterism. Youths could run away from home as a result of corporal punishment and other forms of abuse at home. When individuals leave their home with an empty pocket, the likelihood of committing crime is very high. One informant addressed this as follows:

Lack of appropriate parenting, broken families, and shortage of resources to sustain one’s life and unemployment are the basic pushing factors of youths to street gangsterism. The street gangsters in Ethiopia are meant not to damage the national image or to damage the nation’s future, but merely to get money for survival. They prefer to commit crime rather than waiting for their death by folding their hands. They prefer somebody to be tearful rather than their group dying of starvation (Male, 27).

The other risk factor highly relevant in this section is that of abundant streetism in the urban centers of the country. Street children would end up in street gangsterism most of the time for a number of reasons. The first is the unfinished business of socializing street children with appropriate societal values. The failure to adequately internalize the conventional norms and values of mainstream society in the street children could stimulate them to develop their own sub-
culture and engage in criminal activities. Criminal tendencies are not the innate quality of individuals. One informant added the following regarding this:

Nobody wants to be a criminal by its very nature. Criminality is not a built-in quality of individuals. The youths commit criminal offenses as a result of the unmet financial, material and psycho-social needs in their life. Moreover, peer pressure in drug consumption, unemployment, and abundant streetism are the pushing factors of youths to join street gangsterism and considering the issue as the only means of obtaining the required resources is serving as a reinforcing factor for youths to stick on it (Female, 35).

4. Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Criminals
The socioeconomic and demographic background of the criminals compiled from the Crime known to the police list of Addis Ababa police commission for the last 5 years are presented as follows.

As indicated in table 2, the participation of women as compared to their male counterparts is found to be very low in criminal activities in the ten crime typologies as well as in all 5-year crime statistics. The socialization of women and the attitude of society towards girls could have prevented them from engaging in such illegal activities. The probability of getting girls into street gangsters is very unlikely. One informant endorsed this by saying that "in terms of sex, men segments of the population are highly engaged in street gangsterism. Females occasionally participate in this type of crime, especially in terms of information passing and spying on the targeted victims." This shows that girls play the role of facilitating the criminal acts to be committed by their male counterparts.

The age group distribution of criminals across the ten common violent and property-related crimes in the last 5 years are dominated by the youths found in the age group 16–30 years as evidenced in table 3. The youths of the street gangsters involved in criminal activities like fraud, robbery, pocket picking, and burglary and should have influenced the overall crime statistics of the town. The number of street gangsters participating in the use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs has increased continuously in the crime statistics. This crime category is typical of street gangsters according to the information from qualitative studies. In qualitative studies, the age category of 16–30 has been identified as the most prolific street gangsters.

In terms of age, detected youth vagrants are mostly people between 18 and 30 years of age. We can also sometimes find children between 14 and 16 years of age. When we compare with youths their participation is very little. So, the ones who are highly engaged in these types of crime (street crime) are those productive segments of social class and able bodies with strong physical fitness. Their main intention behind committing the crime is to become rich in short cuts (Female, 37).

Table 4 depicted that regarding educational attainment, surprisingly, in all crime categories, the involvement of those who completed secondary school education is very high in each year. This is very demanding to be investigated in the forthcoming studies by collecting primary information from criminals. Street gangsters are those who are unable to go beyond secondary school education, according to crime statistics from the Addis Ababa police commission. In Ethiopia, for most of the families, the only way out to fulfill their wants and needs is education. When such aspirations are not attained in terms of education, the readily available means of acquiring livelihood is participation in criminal activities. The findings of the qualitative studies depart from the statistical data presented in the above table. One informant said that "regarding their educational level, most of the street gangsters completed elementary school; some of them, very few of them, joined high school and sometimes which is very insignificant in number are university graduates."

Unemployed youths are outnumbered in committing crimes like robbery, burglary, pocket picking, motor vehicle, and equipment theft and use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs as presented in
Table 5. All these crimes are against property, and the unemployed segments of the population are seeking to commit crime in order to earn money for their living.

Table 6 revealed that in all crime categories, the number of unmarried individuals involved in criminal activities is more than their married counterparts. People who have already established a family are controlled from engaging in criminal activities at least in street gangsterism as a result of the responsibility and expectation from their partners. Family has a great role in controlling the behavior of individuals, which in turn reduces the crime rate in a society. On the other hand, family disintegration could result in the development of antisocial behavior more likely in children. One in-depth interview informant endorsed these as follows:

In terms of marital status, most of the time these youth vagrants are unmarried. But, this does not mean that people in relationships are totally excluded from committing the crime. Which means their involvement in such crime is to a lesser degree when compared with unmarried one. In my opinion this great variance of participating in committing crime between married and their unmarried counterpart is because of the existence of family responsibility for the earlier. During the time of crime investigation process, when we look at the family background of the active vagrants, our data shows that some of them are retrace back their background history as they are orphans and street children who grew up without close up family supervision (Male, 36).

In general, the socio-economic characteristics of street gangsters are categorized under the bottom social strata. This was seconded by one informant as "The socioeconomic background of street gangsters indicates almost all of them are from lower economic class of the society, poor family, jobless, destitute … etc."

Besides, one FGD participant added the following while reflecting on the risk factors of street gangsterism as follows:

The major causes leading youths to join street gangs is their unfulfilled socialization and broken families. Most of the street gangs for example, did not complete their schooling due to family disintegration and lack of help. Moreover, people join street gangsterism as an ideal source of money for their living. Street gangs in Ethiopia are not established for fame or for more sophisticated criminal adventures, but simply to get money for their daily living. The abundance of street children in Addis Ababa is the root cause of the street gangsterism problem. Street children have known each other and established a lasting network to sustain their life. Their destination is likely to be street gangs for two reasons. The first is to fulfill their basic necessities and the other to avenge the community because of their anti-social tendencies. Neglecting the street children’s and working to control and prevent street gangsterism is synonymous with pulling the cart before the horse. The other factor is that street gangsterism is by itself the most short-cut means to make money and people have developed the desire to get this opportunity. In general, no one wants to be a member of street gangs if the wants and necessities have been met adequately in early childhood and youthful development (Female, 27).

5. Opportunities, Common Criminal Activities, and the Respective Techniques

The very common places and situations favorable to commit crime are well explored by the street gangs. The hustle and bustle areas are well studied by the street gangs. The likes of the bus-station, the marketing areas, and the taxi-transportation queue are the most preferred areas to commit crime by street gangs. One informant said that “some members of street gangs left the cross-country bus station found in Addis Ketema sub-town for the sake of operating in the new bus station, which was launched in Lamberet area.” Street gangs are unlikely to use weapons in the day time, but sometimes they used knives and sharpen materials to terrorize and blackmail people into taking property. Most of the time street gangs used their minds to come up with innovative techniques to commit crime without employing weapons in Addis Ababa.

Crime against property in various forms is the primary criminal activity committed by street gangsters. Street gangsters might commit crime against the person or other violent crimes in the
| Type of Crime                        | Socio-economic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                     | Educational Status                                         |        |        |        |        |        |
| **Producing or circulating counterfeit money** | Illiterate                                                 | 6      | 6      | 3      | 0      | 3      |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 38     | 23     | 7      | 5      | 6      |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 46     | 50     | 45     | 39     | 35     |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 1      | 2      | 6      | 3      | 0      |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 91     | 81     | 61     | 38     | 44     |
| **Murder and non-negligent manslaughter** | Illiterate                                                 | 7      | 11     | 48     | 8      | 0      |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 23     | 33     | 52     | 47     | 7      |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 127    | 115    | 70     | 103    | 38     |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 8      | 14     | 27     | 6      | 52     |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 165    | 173    | 190    | 164    | 97     |
| **Assault**                         | Illiterate                                                 | 1796   | 1958   | 1805   | 1310   | 702    |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 3322   | 5119   | 6082   | 4118   | 2542   |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 8695   | 7727   | 9373   | 10933  | 10396  |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 342    | 1298   | 1051   | 225    | 2      |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 14,155 | 16,112 | 18,311 | 16,586 | 13,644 |
| **Arson**                           | Illiterate                                                 | 0      | 7      | 0      | 4      | 7      |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 22     | 25     | 15     | 16     | 10     |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 33     | 31     | 64     | 45     | 34     |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 0      | 5      | 1      | 2      | 0      |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 55     | 68     | 80     | 67     | 51     |
| **Robbery**                         | Illiterate                                                 | 238    | 227    | 177    | 73     | 69     |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 907    | 851    | 566    | 494    | 192    |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 1328   | 1252   | 1441   | 1287   | 1250   |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 39     | 147    | 112    | 3      | 18     |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 2513   | 2477   | 2296   | 1854   | 1529   |

(Continued)
| Type of Crime                        | Socio-economic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | Years |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
|                                     | Educational Status                                          | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
| Burglary                            | Illiterate                                                 | 45     | 28     | 106    | 41     | 20     |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 513    | 216    | 171    | 143    | 74     |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 298    | 332    | 368    | 361    | 366    |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 5      | 16     | 31     | 10     | 27     |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 861    | 592    | 676    | 555    | 487    |
| Pocket picking                      | Illiterate                                                 | 191    | 177    | 65     | 137    | 70     |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 946    | 565    | 504    | 323    | 357    |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 385    | 726    | 967    | 917    | 661    |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 28     | 62     | 39     | 50     | 31     |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 1550   | 1530   | 1575   | 1427   | 1119   |
| Motor vehicle and equipment theft   | Illiterate                                                 | 119    | 117    | 42     | 86     | 57     |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 916    | 478    | 474    | 280    | 250    |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 597    | 747    | 734    | 676    | 719    |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 19     | 66     | 23     | 71     | 45     |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 1651   | 1408   | 1273   | 1113   | 846    |
| Fraud                               | Illiterate                                                 | 95     | 131    | 183    | 82     | 78     |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 480    | 517    | 722    | 536    | 449    |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 1685   | 1663   | 1562   | 1718   | 1610   |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 186    | 236    | 498    | 412    | 50     |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 2446   | 2547   | 2965   | 2748   | 2187   |
| Use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs| Illiterate                                                 | 20     | 26     | 19     | 10     | 18     |
|                                     | Primary School                                             | 110    | 99     | 58     | 64     | 801    |
|                                     | Secondary School                                           | 669    | 251    | 383    | 346    | 412    |
|                                     | Above Secondary School                                     | 9      | 64     | 18     | 85     | 5      |
|                                     | Total                                                      | 808    | 440    | 478    | 505    | 1236   |
| Type of Crime                              | Socio-economic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | Years          |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|                                           | Marital Status                                             | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
|                                           | Married                                                     | 41     | 3      | 27     | 22     | 9      |
|                                           | Unmarried                                                   | 50     | 10     | 34     | 24     | 37     |
|                                           | Total                                                       | 91     | 13     | 61     | 46     | 46     |
|                                           | Murder and non-negligent manslaughter                       | Married | 59     | 155    | 85     | 28     | 21     |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 106    | 517    | 112    | 129    | 77     |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 165    | 672    | 197    | 157    | 98     |
|                                           | Assault                                                     | Married  | 4175   | 6127   | 6422   | 5844   | 5270   |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 10,330 | 9975   | 11,889 | 11,638 | 10,219 |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 14,505 | 16,102 | 18,311 | 17,482 | 15,489 |
|                                           | Arson                                                      | Married  | 12     | 27     | 23     | 16     | 13     |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 38     | 57     | 51     | 67     | 53     |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 50     | 80     | 80     | 80     | 53     |
|                                           | Robbery                                                    | Married  | 352    | 293    | 201    | 262    | 145    |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 2163   | 2184   | 2395   | 1651   | 1473   |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 2515   | 2477   | 2596   | 1673   | 1618   |
|                                           | Burglary                                                   | Married  | 116    | 87     | 101    | 137    | 100    |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 745    | 555    | 495    | 425    | 382    |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 861    | 642    | 596    | 562    | 482    |
|                                           | Pocket picking                                             | Married  | 285    | 162    | 184    | 174    | 66     |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 1268   | 1368   | 1391   | 1257   | 1049   |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 1553   | 1530   | 1475   | 1431   | 1115   |
|                                           | Motor vehicle and equipment theft                          | Married  | 168    | 153    | 72     | 155    | 134    |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 1387   | 1255   | 1201   | 558    | 929    |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 1555   | 1408   | 1273   | 713    | 1063   |
|                                           | Fraud                                                      | Married  | 694    | 1118   | 1296   | 1142   | 856    |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 1726   | 1469   | 1669   | 1666   | 1940   |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 1041   | 2587   | 2965   | 2805   | 2796   |
|                                           | Use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs                      | Married  | 30     | 32     | 57     | 34     | 86     |
|                                           |                                                            | Unmarried | 378    | 408    | 421    | 471    | 501    |
|                                           |                                                            | Total    | 408    | 440    | 478    | 505    | 587    |
### Table 6: Distribution of Criminals by their Marital Status

| Type of Crime                     | Socio-economic and Demographic characteristics of Criminals | Years |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
|                                   | Marital Status | 2003EC | 2004EC | 2005EC | 2006EC | 2007EC |
| Producing or circulating counterfeit money | Married | 41     | 3      | 27     | 22     | 9      |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 50     | 10     | 34     | 24     | 37     |
|                                   | Total         | 91     | 13     | 61     | 46     | 46     |
| Murder and non-negligent manslaughter | Married | 59     | 155    | 85     | 28     | 21     |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 106    | 517    | 112    | 129    | 77     |
|                                   | Total         | 165    | 672    | 197    | 157    | 98     |
| Assault                           | Married       | 4175   | 6127   | 6422   | 5844   | 5270   |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 10,330 | 9975   | 11,889 | 11,638 | 10,219 |
|                                   | Total         | 14,505 | 16,102 | 18,311 | 17,482 | 15,489 |
| Arson                             | Married       | 12     | 27     | 23     | 16     | 13     |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 38     | 36     | 57     | 51     | 40     |
|                                   | Total         | 50     | 63     | 80     | 67     | 53     |
| Robbery                           | Married       | 352    | 293    | 201    | 262    | 145    |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 2163   | 2184   | 2395   | 1651   | 1473   |
|                                   | Total         | 2515   | 2477   | 2596   | 1673   | 1618   |
| Burglary                          | Married       | 116    | 87     | 101    | 137    | 100    |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 745    | 555    | 495    | 425    | 382    |
|                                   | Total         | 861    | 642    | 596    | 562    | 482    |
| Pocket picking                    | Married       | 285    | 162    | 184    | 174    | 66     |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 1268   | 1368   | 1391   | 1257   | 1049   |
|                                   | Total         | 1553   | 1530   | 1475   | 1431   | 1115   |
| Motor vehicle and equipment theft | Married       | 168    | 153    | 72     | 155    | 134    |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 1387   | 1255   | 1201   | 558    | 929    |
|                                   | Total         | 1555   | 1408   | 1273   | 713    | 1063   |
| Fraud                             | Married       | 694    | 1118   | 1296   | 1142   | 856    |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 1726   | 1469   | 1669   | 1666   | 1940   |
|                                   | Total         | 1041   | 2587   | 2965   | 2805   | 2796   |
| Use of hypnotic and anesthetic drugs | Married     | 30     | 32     | 57     | 34     | 86     |
|                                   | Unmarried     | 378    | 408    | 421    | 471    | 501    |
|                                   | Total         | 408    | 440    | 478    | 505    | 587    |
process of their attempt to commit crime against property. In other words, committing violent crimes is not the first intention of street gangsters. One FGD discussant said that “the likes of robbery and the attempt to murder take on properties like money, jewelry, mobile phone, laptop, and vehicle apparatus are the dominant criminal activity of street gangs. The central focus of the street gangs is not hurting people, but getting money in whatever means” (Female, 35).

The nature of criminal techniques employed by street gangsters in Jimma town and Addis Ababa city are different in some aspects. One informant from Jimma town said that:

In some instance street gangsters make special assessment of the targeted person and following him/her after withdrawing the money from the bank, for this end sometime they move in mass in bajaj, just wandering from place to place the whole day in bajaj and when they get any person whom they think have a money they invite him/ her to inter in the bajaj and taking him /her to place where there is no people and taking all his/ her belongings (Female, 27).

Another informant from Jimma police station indicated the techniques employed by street gangsters as follows:

For instance, at a place of high population movement the street gangsters move in mass in cooperative way they are so active to their job, they share also roles, for example, one criminal pick the property and when immediately caught red handed and investigated hi is empty hand and not with the property the magic behind is that he has already throw it to the second criminal the second will pass to the third coworker and achieve successfully their anti-social act in chained cooperative way. The illegal material these gangs move with is knives and different sharpen materials like surgical blades. So far no war weapons like Pistol and Gun fire are detected on captured criminals in our wereda (Male, 37).

On the other hand, street gangsters in Addis Ababa are specialists in introducing new techniques and mastering the common methods in their experience. One key informant from Addis Ababa Police Commission noted the following:

Street gangsters change their techniques of committing crime from time to time. They are well experienced on a single crime which they repetitively commit. Which means most of them are recidivists, meaning they commit some crime, then they go to jail though they get some lesson out if they don’t change their life and for another time they again commit the same crime and are taken back to jail. Since they consider their violent act as a means of livelihood they consider themselves as an expert on it. As a result they do a training and are trained how to pick people’s pockets in such a way that no one is aware of them, even the victim itself. For example, if they want to break into a house, immediately after they jumped into the compounder under attack what they critically observe is whether the windows and doors are open or not. If not using derailment and other supporting materials to make a burglary (Male, 37).

FGD discussants and informants have identified the following innovative techniques for committing crimes against property. The techniques are mostly practiced by street gangsters in Addis Ababa city. The techniques include:

1. **Ginter (Deceiving)**: selling properties and apparatus-like watches, mobile phones, and other electronics that are not working.
2. **Shibili (Ergendo)**: stealing the properties they are supposed to carry, disappearing by taking the properties of others which the street gangsters are supposed to carry.
3. **Haya sost (the 23)**: taking people in the wrong direction and then disappearing into the routes only the street gangs are familiar with after taking the properties of the deceived person. Merchants from the countryside are easily identified and targeted by street gangsters. One of the street gangs approaches them and gives ten thousand birrs or whatever
amount of money to the others who seem like cash collectors. Then, the clumsy countryside merchant is expected to do the same. At the end of the day, the countryside merchant will notice that he has been robbed by the street gangsters.

(4) **Wetebe (Shuashua):** this is a lottery related deception. Criminals want you to help them to withdraw the money from the national lottery pretending as if they won a lottery. They beg you to withdraw the money, approaching strangers as if they do not have an identification card, and in exchange, you are asked to give them money, jewelry, or other properties as a guarantee. You should have agreed to give them what you have been asked and go to the national lottery to withdraw the money. Finally, you will learn that the lottery is fake and learns that you are tricked by the street gangs.

(5) **Gichit (collusion):** by this method, two or three street gangs approach you and one of them collides with you wittingly and the other one takes money from your pocket, while you are focusing on the first person who collides with you. Making a deliberate and intentional collision with a potential target and asking an artificial excuse to make the other gang to take the property of the victim, while the target is busy with the collider.

(6) **Entif (spitting):** after the potential target is identified, one of the gangsters spits on the target and then approaches for presenting a fake apology, and while the target is making the conversation, the other gangsters take away the properties of the target. If the target is fortunate to notice the incident and tries to defend, the gangsters move to attack by sharpening instruments.

In a nutshell, the overall goal of street gangsters is to get money/property illegally for their personal gains and unfair benefits. The street gangsters identify the situations, places, and time of committing crime easily and get the required item unconditionally. The suitable conditions were studied and identified previously, and they knew exactly how to commit and who the potential target should be earlier.

Another type of common criminal activity of street gangs is targeting people who come from the countryside. The deception of the individuals who come from the countryside in which street gangs easily identify the culture and region of the people from rural areas and approach by pretending that they are also from that region and want to help them, and then they commit whatever they want easily on the people of the countryside.

**6. Burdens of Street Gangsterism and Government’s Interventions**

The presence of street gangsterism is begetting multifaceted problems in the community. The community may start to hesitate with the political commitment of the government to tackle the street gangsterism phenomena. All in all, the prevalence of street gangsterism has political, social, and economic implications. One FGD discussant endorsed this as follows:

> The presence of street gangs could beget a far-reaching consequence on the political-economy and social affairs of the city in particular and the country in general. The commonplace street gangsters are a great threat for law abiding citizens. The community may lack trust in the government when their possessions are being grabbed by the gangs. People may fear to work at the night shift as a result of the presence of the gangsters which could have an implication in the economic productivity of the city. Thus, the street gangs who are labeled as night shift workers are striking the revenue of the nation by stealing properties and inflicting terror on the tax payers. The street gangsters are also a threat for the image of the sub city. Investors, tourists and other organizations could avoid expanding their visits and business in such neighborhoods (Female, 31).

Moreover, loss of life in the attempt to take possession of others, increase in crime rate, and infamous reputation of the sub-city are some consequences of street gangsters. Street gangs may strengthen their bonds and expand their chains to other parts of the country. Lack of trust in police institutions as a result of repeated criminal offenses in the neighborhood, failure to report criminal
offenses and criminals to the police, the community withheld information from reaching the police and this trend may in turn affect the general wellbeing and prosperity of the nation. Psychological disaster on the victims is the observed consequence of the prevailing street gangsterism. In addition, the economic crisis on the family of the victim is the immediate effect of street gangsterism in the country. Street gangsterism may generate widespread repercussions on the economic, political, and social fabric of the community. Their prevalence is considered as one factor for the communities not to trust the political system in general and the police institutions of the country in particular.

Community policing is the cutting edge measure introduced by the government to mitigate the problem of street gangsterism in particular and criminogenic tendencies in general. The pilot project for the community policing program was started in the Addis Ketema sub-town of Addis Ababa for the high prevalence of street gangsterism. Street gangs are part of the local community, and community police officers are working closely with members of the community to demolish the problem of street gangsterism. The first advantage of community policing is that information about street gangs could be retrieved from the community members easily. Community policing officers are mobilizing the community to solve their problems by themselves, and as a result of these needy members of the community have received material and financial support, small-level bridges and roads have been built, charity associations like Macedonia have been visited by selected members of the community facilitated by the community policing office of the woreda. Thus, the community policing program is functioning well in Addis Ketema sub-town, and the communities’ reaction and support are very encouraging. Coffee ceremonies held in the neighborhood rather than in conference halls have been found to be helped in addressing the problem of street gangsterism by collecting information from the dwellers.

The other strategy is to organize members of the street gangs in micro and small enterprises to generate income for their living. According to one informant from the Addis Abeba Police Commission, the following income generating activities are absorbing street gangsters.

*The bus station porters, taxi transportation coordinators, shoeshine, parking and cobblestone are some of the activities left for the former members of street gangs. The members of these micro and small enterprises are given uniforms with captions written in their back to create awareness about crime prevention and control in the wider community. The slogans are ‘let us prevent crime together’, ‘I couldn’t keep silent watching crime being committed’ and these slogans terrified other street gangs (Male, 27).*

On some occasions, youths organized in micro and small enterprises are making a U-turn to street gangsterism or reinforce and persist their criminal behavior in the micro and small enterprises as a result of lack of rehabilitation intervention before they join the enterprises. One FGD discussant noted this as follows:

*The government is working on creating job opportunities for street gangs and vagrants of the sub-town. The street gangsters are identified and provided the opportunity to organize themselves and engage in conventional income generating activities. There needs to be strong follow up and supervision to those who have started working in the micro and small enterprises. The process of rehabilitating and changing the mentality of street gangster’s criminal tendency is most of the time overlooked. They might sustain their criminal tendency and habit in the micro and small enterprises they have been organized (Female, 29).*

Community policing is another means of controlling street gangsters and vagrant crime in sub-towns. Community policing, as its name indicates, is very close to the neighborhoods, and the participation of the communities in the implementation of the strategies of community policing is mandatory. Consequently, the street gangsters are part of the community and community policing officers are easily getting information about the street gangs in the respective neighborhoods.
After the commencement of the community policing program, the prevalence of street gangsterism was reduced to a great extent.

Community-based policing could be considered the first fruitful intervention strategy administered by the government in this regard. One informant seconded this as follows:

*Before the community policing was introduced the police simply took measures to arrest the street gangs and it was not effective. But now the community policing is working on changing the mentality of the street gangs by organizing awareness creation campaigns. Now thanks to community policing that the community themselves are police to protect their society from the danger of crime. The community and the police become hand and glove as a result of the community mobilizations and empowerment activities executed by the community policing officers of the sub-town (Male, 37).*

The police force is expected to participate in the social and economic activities of the community. Crime control and prevention are not the only task of the police in the era of community policing, rather participating in the social affairs of the community is becoming normal duties. One FGD discusant endorsed this as follows:

*The police should ask the sick individuals in the community, help the needy members of the community, participate in the arbitration of the conflict groups and work in closer with the dwellers. The coffee ceremony organized by the selected committees and the community policing officers is the other strategy to increase the awareness of the community in fighting street gangsters and other criminals by reporting information about the criminals (Male, 33).*

Community policing officers are implementing several strategies to control the problem of street gangsterism. One key informant from the Addis Ketema Sub-city community policing office noted the following:

*One mechanism we are applying is organization of task forces. The task force is organized in each kebele to prevent and control crime in our sub-town. The first task group is known as the prevention task group which is responsible for keeping and maintaining the security of the community in the respective areas. Community policing officers are organizers of the task group and appropriate evaluation and feedback is provided for the group based on their performance. The former street gangs are also included in the task group known as Agazy Hayil, an Amharic term for supportive force, to the community policing officers in each kebele. Micro and small enterprises are also absorbing a sizable number of street gangsters. However, in some cases street gangsters who have been organized in micro enterprises sustain their criminal habit in their workplace as a result of absence of holistic rehabilitation including training and counseling before they join the workplace. Thus, community policing and job opportunity creations are the primary means implemented in our sub-town to reduce the problem of street gangsterism (Male, 46).*

The goal of community policing and the various activities undertaken by the government is to dismantle the problem of street gangsterism from the urban centers of the country. Since the inauguration of community policing, a great deal of effort has been exerted to tackle the problem of street gangsterism, but the problem still persists as one serious challenge of contemporary urban communities in the country.

One key informant also discussed the intervention of the government at grassroot level as follows:

*Currently the government is working towards solving the problem at grass root. Especially by focusing on street children and taking them to different vocational training centers to socialize them in such a way that they could develop socially acceptable manners. Because street children have more opportunity of exposure to different drugs which might lead them to join gang life (Male, 54).*
7. Discussion
The study highlighted the interaction between geographic location of sub-towns, population size, and social composition. These are considered factors for the high prevalence of street gangsterism in some sub-towns of the study area. The physical environment is found to be an enabling factor in the rampancy of street gangsterism. Nature and type of neighborhoods are also determinants of the prevalence of street gangs in the study area. Most of the time, neighborhoods with a large number of immigrants and heterogeneous population are more likely to be suitable areas for the operation of street gangsters. Thus, this finding is in line with the study of Mellgren (2011) that states structural conditions, like residential mobility and ethnic heterogeneity, lead to crime through creating conditions in which community members are unable to exercise social control.

Neighborhood characteristics play a crucial role in understanding the causes and distribution of crime. Socio-spatial disorders are factors that can explain the reasons for concentration of crimes in certain neighborhoods than others. Socio-spatial disorders lead to decline in the collective efficacy of local residents in solving common problems together. Migration, residential instability, and heterogeneity in-terms of ethnic background and place of birth are the major factors that are responsible for causing neighborhood social disorder and in-turn crime. This finding of the study goes in line with the study conducted by Decker, Germert, and Pyrooz (2009), which states that the history of gangs is intertwined with migration. Their study further revealed that processes such as immigration, migration, and resettlement have had an important impact on the transmission of gangs on an international, national, and local scale, often enhanced by the impact of immigration.

The study indicated that although crime prone neighborhoods are known, special attention is not given to these areas to control the rampancy of street gangsterism. The study noted the importance of implementing special interventions in those crime prone neighborhoods to control and prevent street gangsterism. Thus, this finding is in line with the study of Eck, Chainey, Cameron, and Wilson (2005); Paynich and Hill (2013) which indicated that identifying high crime areas or hot spots plays a key role in how law enforcement agencies operate and address crime in problem areas.

Disorganized family situations, absence of responsive parenting style, and inability to adequately internalize the conventional norms and values of mainstream society facilitate the process for children from these families to develop their own sub-culture and engage in criminal activities. Similar to this study finding, Yoshikawa (1994) stated that poor parenting behavior or family environment increase the risk of juvenile involvement in crime and antisocial behaviors.

The physical environment is found to be an enabling factor in the rampancy of street gangsterism. Nature and type of neighborhoods are also determinants of the prevalence of street gangs in the study area. Most of the time, neighborhoods with large numbers of newly arrived immigrants attract gangs and are suitable areas for the operation of street gangsters as they take advantage of heterogeneity and lose social bonds in these areas. Moreover, the finding of the present research indicates the interaction between geographic location of sub-towns, population size, and social composition are considered factors for the high prevalence of street gangsterism in some sub-towns of the study area. The current data are similar to the findings of Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) which depicted that children who grew up in neighborhoods characterized by higher levels of concentrated disadvantage, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility were more likely to exhibit higher levels of antisocial behavior and child conduct problems.

The faulty socialization of children and the parenting style of the family are the other risk factors leading children to join street gangsterism. Youths can run away from home as a result of corporal punishment and other forms of abuse at home. When individuals leave their home with an empty pocket, the likelihood of committing crime is very high. This finding is in line with the study of Okorodudu (2010), which indicates that parents who exerted control and monitored adolescent activities and promoted self-autonomy were found to have the most positive effects on
adolescents’ behavior. Uninvolving parents and also non-responsive to adolescents’ needs had negative impacts on their behavior.

Criminals know where the best place to commit crimes is. The current finding indicated that bus stations, marketing areas, and taxi-transportation queue are the most preferred areas to commit crime by street gangs. Similarly, the finding by Natarajan et al. (2015) indicates that robberies occur at bus stops primarily on a single bus route.

The present study indicates that people at lower socioeconomic status, particularly the poor and unemployed, are increasingly involved in criminal activities. This finding is in line with the study of Buonanno (2003) which states that crime is closely related to poverty, social exclusion, wage and income inequality, cultural and family background, level of education, and other economic and social factors that may affect individual’s propensity to commit crimes such as cultural characteristics, age, and sex.

The commencement of community policing has contributed to the decline of crime prevalence, particularly street gangsterism. The prevalence of street gangsterism has shown a reduction to a great extent since the commencement of community policing programs in the study areas. Community policing is among the measures taken by the government to tackle the problem of street gangsterism. Crime is greatly reduced in those neighborhoods where community policing programs are effectively implemented. In addition to reducing crime incidence, community policing activities have boosted community members’ capacity to address their problem by themselves by mobilizing community resources.

8. Conclusion
Street gangsterism has mushroomed from time to time in most Ethiopian cities and towns. It was started based on improvisation and expanded to include other technical modalities. The major reasons for the prevalence of street gangsterism in the towns are highly linked with rural-urban migration and poverty. The common criminal offenses of Ethiopian street gangsters are basically targeting crime against property and related offenses in the meantime of getting the property of others. Although street gangs in Jimma and Addis Ababa are loosely organized as compared to the gangsters of other counterpart foreign cities, multifaceted impacts, and multitude problems have resulted in the towns because of the prevalence of street gangs. In each budget year, a sizable number of criminal offenses are committed by street gangsters in the respective cities. The criminal activities committed by street gangsters and their mere presence and operation have produced a devastating socio-economic crisis in the towns. These far-reaching social and economic consequences are found to be in its critical phase and need to be addressed by concerned bodies and establishments.

In contemporary Ethiopia, rapid urbanization engenders sheer social disorganization in major cities, such as Addis Ababa and Jimma. Social disorganization in cities in turn creates fertile grounds for the emergence and perpetuation of street gangs. Addis Ababa and Jimma cities attract many people with different backgrounds and are known for being a miniature of Ethiopia in terms of the diversity of dwellers with regard to ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and place of origin. This extreme heterogeneity characteristic of urbanites produces weak social norms and loosens informal social control mechanisms in the social structure of urban residents. Social disorganization is well manifested in Ethiopian cities and street gangs that exploit this context to practice their criminal offenses. Sub-cities with higher levels of social disorganization in Addis Ababa and Jimma are well known among the wider public for being nests of street gangs.

9. Recommendation
There are promising measures taken by society and the government to mitigate the problem of street gangs in Jimma and Addis Ababa, but yet not satisfactory and additional intervention strategies and policy initiatives are needed to tackle the problem. The areas of gangsterism are timely and should have gotten the attention of academia, but in reality, it is difficult to get
substantiated empirical studies, so in the future the interested researchers may conduct an extensive quantitative and intensive qualitative investigation by incorporating the life stories of street gang members.

In Ethiopia, there is no rehabilitation center for street gangsters, and the recidivism is high because of the absence of rehabilitation centers. Consequently, rehabilitation centers and life skill training institutions should be established to bring a desirable change in the area. The criminals’ rehabilitation service institutions serve street gangsters to get behavioral change, counseling, and psychosocial services. This in turn should be used to curb the U-turn and recidivism of street gangsters from their old habits.

Only the perspectives of the police are included in the study and the researchers recommending further study on the issue at hand to explore the perspectives of the wider community, victims of street gangsterism, and street gangsters. More attention has to be in place to modernize the crime data storage and management system at the police stations and commissions.

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