

## The Co-relationship between Inter-gang conflicts for longitudinal expansion and retain their identification in an urban context

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### Abstract

In the urban city many gangs are there and there are inter-gang rivalry. They are established in GN divisions and one gang tries to run-over the other. This paper try to reveal why is this? How has they converted conflict into a privilege for their survival? How gangsters have become heroes and how people look up to them? In anti-social activities popular gangs are looked up to for support? The Research focused on 493 identified youth gang members belonging to 75 gangs within 14 GN divisions in Colombo city, within the age group of 18 - 32 years. All the said gangs and the gang members were identified within the study area through a snowball technique using available contacts and via the data gathered using formal research methods.

As a whole, appropriately followed localization method is a crucial factor for a gang to perform in a planned and secured manner. Basically, a sufficient time margin might be necessary for a gang to be established in a geographical area. As an average, it needs minimum 5 years of duration to attain such stability. Another important matter is that any new group or gang cannot be formally established in a particular area without permission or acceptance of established gangs in the targeted area.

**Keywords:** Co-relationship, Inter-gang Conflicts, Identification, Longitudinal Expansion, Urban context

### 1. Introduction

Youth gangsters have grown to become a common sight and a festering issue in the Western province of Sri Lanka, especially in the Colombo district. This issues is excessively prevalent among the poverty stricken and ill-educated communities in the city. Some of the gang members are born in Colombo while others have become residents in Colombo owing to their marriages, employment or being unauthorized dwellers, thereby they could became either founders in forming gangs or co-partners of maintaining groups. When the gravity of such mentality is concerned those youth who were born in streets and grew up as street children without legal ownership of any land tend to find a permeant place for settling, eventually it builds a mentality to behave as heroic bandits. It also could observe that each one of them had to assess the duration of their experience in urban community as a formal indicator used for accessing gang or the gang identity. The geographical ownership inherited to them from their ancestors also considered whereas, some youths get opportunity to join gangs through senior gangsters, friends, or relatives.

Deprived of the joys of a normal and secured childhood and adolescence, many of these children get involved in abrasive street gang activities and face adverse life threatening experiences that even include death through criminal activities unleashed by themselves or other rival groups. Those who survive, roam the streets or waste away in despair, relieving their suffering by escaping into the often self-destructive lifestyles and income generation mechanisms. In addressing the above, this paper has been developed to understand the factors that conflict youth onto the streets and the factors that play a pivotal part in sustaining them on the streets, giving

specific emphasis to youth gangs operating in Colombo and suburbs. In supplementing, the research focused on areas to ascertain the expansion way through their conflicts and negative impact youth gangs have on the lives of general public in the specified area.

### 2. Research Methodology

Collection of Primary Data

Compilation of primary data of the study was attended in several steps.

#### Step One

Observation was the key instrument applied during the above time span on field data and information.

#### Step Two

A questionnaire was used in this research too. There were 67 questions consisting of both close ended and open ended questions. Going one step ahead number of case stories too, could be recorded while interview was in progress. These stories are direct views of the respective respondents or the indirect interviewees and these articulations were electronically recorded with the permission of the responding youth. Small group based discussion was one other method applied to get views of respondents.

#### Step Three

Over and above, the informal approaches practiced such as casual interviews, observatory information sharing, and small group interviews, planned under this step played a facilitative role in the successful completion of the research. During this period building an information network was

possible with the representation of Youth gangs, Security sections, Road dwelling communities, GOs and NGOs etc. Similarly, several Case studies of children attributed by gang leaders and also the children holding membership in gangs too, were prepared.

Recording life histories is another technique used in this study to generate more information relating to the central theme. Some life histories provide a profile of the ganging.

**Sample Size**

This research is a descriptive Cross-sectional study. All interviewee samples in the study area were identified through snow-ball technique and a random sample as well as through observations. The sample size for this component was calculated using the following formula;

$$n = [\alpha^2 X p (1-p)]/d^2$$

Where,

n = required sample size

α = critical value for specified confidence level (taken as 1.96)

p = proportion of events being measured among the gang members (taken as 0.5 to obtain the maximum sample size, as the previous proportions are not known)

d = absolute precision (taken as 0.05)

Though final sample size earmarked at the planning stage was 423, it had to be increased up to 493 mainly due to the snowball effect. Participants: Based on the research data, the most basic characteristic of the samples have been structured as follows by using the key variables such as age, location of the respondents and activities. According to this, 75 gangs within the selected 14 GN divisions. These GN divisions are; Fort, Pettah, Mattakkuliya, Modera, Blumendhal, Kotahena, New Bazar, Grandpass, Maligawatta, Kochchikade, Suduwella, Keselwatta, Panchikawatta and Maligakanda.

**Data analysis**

**Survey System**

Once the data collected from each participant of the questioner, the same data were entered in to the new data base system for analysis. The System stores the data entered in the Database for future use and data sorting and analyzing

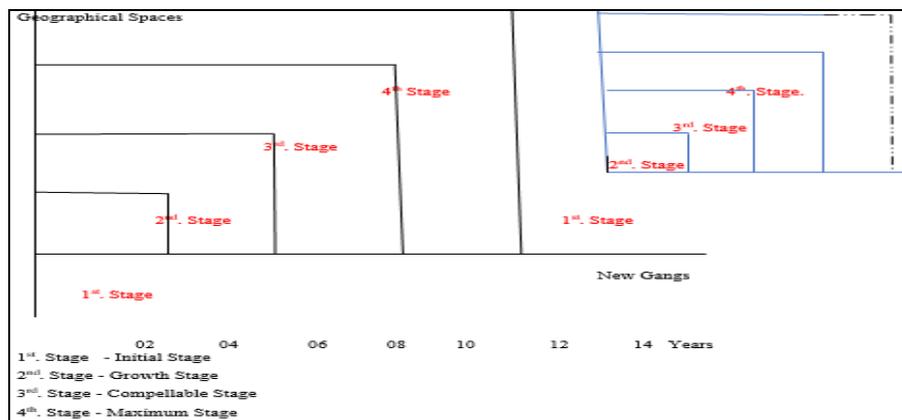
techniques have programmed in the system to get different analysis and thus reports as per the objectives of the research. This system has developed using Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 and Microsoft SQL server Management Studio 2008. The software interface and its functionalities are developed using C# programming language. It is a simple and modern, but object oriented programming language which has being developed by Microsoft.

The system database built using slandered SQL (Structured Query Language) with support of Visual Studio - entity framework 4.0.

**3. Results & Discussion**

Generally, each gang has to follow strong cultural practices which are compulsory and commonly applicable for all in gangs in which one principle norm was to behave without creating any quarrel or conflicts within gangs. The observed disagreements between gangs had basically derived from each one’s involvement on anti-social activities. In particular, the root causes for disagreement are the issues emerging when contracts are to be entered into on drug related or prostitution or else on contracts on murdering related issues. A strong fact behind large number of clashes is the competition arising on sales, trafficking and the usage of drugs. For sale of drugs each gang has identified defined geographies. Usually each gang tends to have a well-defined territory in order to minimize etc., in order to assign divisional ownership. Under this territorial system no outsiders are permitted to sale drugs or to enter into others’ divisions without permission.

The process of urban youth ganging in Colombo has been evaluated in this research as an operational system expanded in several stages based on the establishment with in a gang with the time and geographical space acquired. Those stages are 1. Initial stage, 2. Growth Stage, Compelled Stage and 4. Maximum Stage. With the time extended, a gang can expand with more geographical space and identification among the groups and the society. But there may new gang formations during the stages three and four due to conflict of interests and resulted internal conflicts.



**Fig 1:** Expansion models of Youth Gangs

(Sadu this model has introduced by you.but the thing is i cant draw it properly.if you can please draw it here.this is just only a draft)

The process of urban youth ganging in Colombo has been evaluated in this thesis as an Operational system expanded in several stages as shown in

Table 4.4  
The process of urban youth ganging in Colombo has been

evaluated in this thesis as an Operational system expanded in several stages as shown in Figure 1

**Table 1:** Longitudinal Scales of Urban Youth Ganging in Colombo City

Stages of expansion of Gangs	Inherited features in pertinent to each stage
1 <sup>st</sup> . Stage - Initial Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimal membership</li> <li>- Low geographical identity</li> <li>- Those joined together are with similar inquisitiveness</li> <li>- If there are contradictory interests any one can leave the gang.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Freedom is there</li> </ul> </li> <li>- No serious legal repercussions faced by members</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> . Stage - Growth Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of members getting increased</li> <li>- A leadership is getting structured</li> <li>- A stage of growing the feelings of ganging</li> <li>- Geographical identity is getting expanded                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent membership</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Clashes are there between the gang and the legal authorities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Becoming respectful on sub cultural factors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> . Stage - Compellable Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent membership is there</li> <li>- Leadership and the deputy leadership is confirmed                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gang identity is declared</li> <li>- Resources acquired for the gang</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Communication network is strengthened in an organized manner                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Priority will be given for delinquent actions</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Amidst of clashes with the Law as well as with the competitive agencies, it will elevate it's identity</li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> . Stage - Maximum Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confidentiality</li> <li>- Strong cohesiveness</li> <li>- Building strong monopoly about the geographical identity gained already.</li> <li>- Operation of high scaled illegal transactions in an organized manner</li> <li>- New groups come to join while leaving older gangs due to disagreements</li> <li>- Monopoly and authoritative power of strengthening financial assets and their involvement in delinquent actions are in the process of increasing.</li> <li>- Power-centeredness to protect from legal consequences as well as the reactions of opponent gangs</li> </ul>

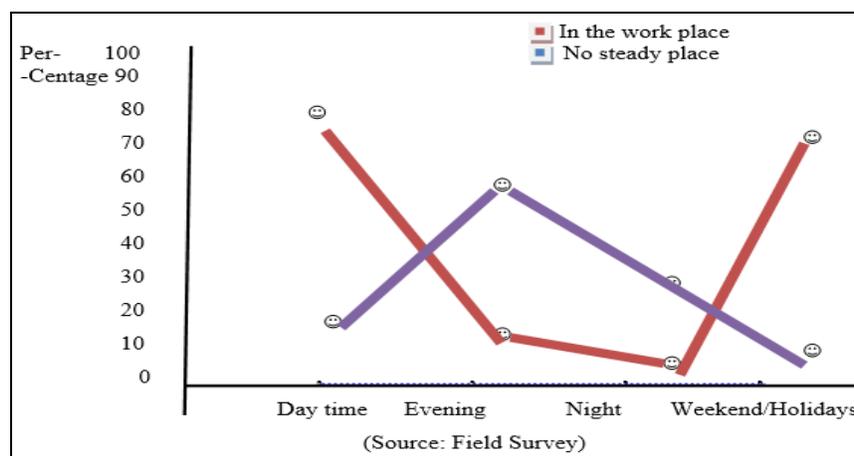
(Source: Field Survey )

Furthermore the Pattern of time spending by gang youth was analyzed in this study. It was disclosed that this pattern of

daily practice was common for both married and single gang members as illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 2

**Table 2:** Pattern of Time Spending by Gang Members

Time perspective	Time spent at the work place	Time spent in ad hock place
Day Time	78 %	19 %
Evening	19 %	58.5 %
Night time	10.5 %	29.5 %
Week Ends/Holidays	73 %	10 %



**Fig 2:** Pattern of Time Spending by Gang Members

### Gang and characteristics of gang culture

It is imperative to study the reactions of the gangs towards legal proceedings in their sole exertion of securing the leadership and identity among the urban community. When the attitudes of gang members and those groups under formation are concerned, they perceive their leaders as exclusive rulers instead of the legal aspects. Since, existence of a gang is uniquely based on illegal actions; gangs are tending to be a challenge for the institutions such as police, judiciary, prison and other rehabilitating groups. In line with above facts and several other causes it substantiates precisely that the disreputable gangs are a social group diverging against prevailing social norms. This section focuses on the sub cultural behavior being adopted by the youth gang members in order to continue varied illegal activities without interruptions. Also attends to put emphasis on the legal background of varied crimes and other anti-social activities and their affectivity towards the general public.

From the gangs' point of view it is essential that each gang maintains utmost confidence in their dealings within therein involvement merely to accumulate financial assets via anti-social acts. For this reason, gangs themselves have adopted several 'codes of ethics' or certain conditions formulated by them and such principles became values or the sub culture of gangs. Those can be identified as follows;

- Basically, all must be obedient towards the leadership of the gang Leader. Each member must be obliged to carry out any task assigned by the leader irrespective of whatsoever factors externally assumable such as the time perspective, environment, any physical or mental factors or any other reason.
- It is extra ordinary that each member must maintain utmost confidence on each and all activities pursued by the gang. It also necessary to sustain strong inter-relationship between members. In short, life guarantee is a must to safe guard the gang.
- It is also prohibited any personal contacts with other gang members or any outsider. What is permitted is only related to the assigned tasks means that all such contacts must be familiar to the gang.
- It is noticeable that enrolling new members to the gang happens in a more astute manner. One of the principles is that when a gang member is to introduce a new member to his leader the introducing party has to hold its responsibility in a life-long basis. It is a standard rule that if the new comer happens to be guilty over an issue the member who introduced him needs to undergo the penalty.
- All new recruits are subjected for a period of probation which lasts until the new comer gains confidence of all seniors. The length of probation period depends on the

time he takes to gain the said assurance and the popularity.

- Each gang has a sub-leader as well. He becomes a person with several skills such as aptitudes to control and to lead the gang and very specially the attributed capacity to run into clashes frequently with legal personnel. Gang leader in line with the opinions of others too, and based on popularity appoints sub leader and virtually, both has similar powers within the gang.
- On obvious reasons, if anyone found guilty over an issue, he is supposed to be expelled from the gang, yet it is likely that such expelling can be a threat to the security of the gang hence, the guilty party will have to scarify his life instead of expelling.
- Due to whatsoever reasons there is no permission for anyone to create or continue internal clashes and if anyone initiates such action he is subjected for punishment.
- It is prohibited to create any vulnerability to the gang to secure his life interest even in the event of a legal complicity that arises within the gang.

### Key concerns of the localization process

As a whole, appropriately followed localization method is a crucial factor for a gang to perform in a planned and secured manner. Basically, a sufficient time margin might be necessary for a gang to be established in a geographical area. As an average, it needs minimum 5 years of duration to attain such stability. There are many groups in different locations within Colombo urban area, used to be assembled in different times during the day yet, these groups cannot be considered as gangs as they do not display certain characteristics of gangs. Taxi drivers, load carriers, pavement hawkers etc. are assembled in certain places in every streets, in an informal manner and shows certain features such as helping each other, working with unity etc., but these groups cannot characteristics to be predominantly embedded in formal gangs. These groups usually do not have personal information of each associate but in formal gangs it is an extraordinary requirement that each ones identity and individual details are available. With these characteristics formal gangs take measures to institute their popularity at the preliminary stages and achieve steadiness as well as solidity within the respective geographical area and achieve the localization.

Another important matter is that any new group or gang cannot be formally established in a particular area without permission or acceptance of established gangs in the targeted area. The responding youth shared their views on this matter emphasizing the depth of attentiveness on such initiatives as included in the table 3 The views shared indicate the gravity of the localization process too.

**Table 3:** Views of the responding youth on how they react when there are new groups or unidentified groups entering into their territories. (n=493)

Reponses of the interviewees	Number	Percentage
1. Keep leadership informed	392	(79.5)
2. Create awareness within gang memberships	408	(82.7)
3. Notifying other gangs too	292	(59)
4. Inquiring details of the encroachers	105	(21)
5. Repeating or assaulting	36	(7.3)

6. Chase away the newly entered group	42	(8.5)
7. All above mentioned actions	421	(85.3)
8. No action would be taken	31	(6)
9. Other views	03	(0.6)

(Source: Field Survey)

Irrespective of the views expressed by 6% of responding youth pointing out 'no preferred action' the majority's (85.3%) views are apparent that such incidents can create disorderly conduct or turbulent situation. There are three main causes as follows that could be affected on established gangs; hence, they feel to take steady actions against new comers,

- Such move can affect the identity developed through tiresome effort by the formal gang
- New groups can create challenges for the survival of the formal gang
- Formal gang doesn't want to get its popularity affected due to the entering of new groups

In reference to the data shown in some of the factors against several characteristics which are hereditary to youth gangs were identifiable and several of them are briefed hereunder.

- Each group has 3 or more members
- Members used to associate regularly in the form of a group
- Group identifies itself as a gang or a group
- Group sustains itself overtime
- Members have similar goals, believes and values
- Members wear specific colors, items or style of dress
- Group controls or claims a specific geographical territory
- Group has organizational structure
- Group has identifiable leadership
- Group uses initiation practices
- Gang pursues associations with female groups
- Gang attracts negative attention from the community
- Gang causes fear of intermediation in the community
- Gang engages with anti-social behavior
- They sell or distribute and use drugs

#### 4. Conclusions

The process of urban youth ganging in Colombo has been evaluated in this thesis as an operational system expanded in several stages based on the establishment with in a gang with the time and geographical space acquired. Those stages are 1. Initial stage, 2. Growth Stage, Compelled Stage and 4. Maximum Stage. With the time extended, a gang can expand with more geographical space and identification among the groups and the society. But there may new gang formations during the stages three and four due to conflict of interests and resulted internal conflicts. Also revealed that external parties used to hire these gang members on contract basis for murders, throwing Acid, kidnapping, threatening, and stealing vehicle parts or valuable items etc., which is a common occurrence in the city. This nature of contracts is found to be the root course for the formation of under-world gangs. The normal practice in accepting a contract for murder is a costly affair in which the cost chargeable is added with the value of the lives too, of those to be involved. Usually the clients of these contracts are powerful groups in the society. It is a common practice that the clients in these types of contracts are inclined to pay higher rates since they need to hide their identity. Besides payments all other requisites are provided for

those hired just to hide the client's identity for ever. Youth involved in these contracts can achieve economically well off targets as well as to gain popularity among the clients. The said clients too, always look for well to do parties with higher recognition to assign the planned criminal act.

When the inter-gang clashes are concerned, conflicts can be cropped-up even on political reasons. Also when there are 3 – 4 gangs operating in a GN Division, conflicts can be a common feature. When communities respect one leader in a particular gang other gangs start quarrels with the said gang to over-ride its power to win over the highest popularity.

Gang youth live in fear and un-safety due to their usual conduct. A large majority (95%) of youth live with uncertainty and risk. Tendency is there for the balance 5% too, to face similar situation at any time hence the entire gang youth has colossal fear. This might have been one of the reasons that they tend to go for booze as a regular habit. Inquiry made also revealed that their real enemy is not the police but the rivalry groups acting in similar groups.

#### 5. Policy implications

##### A network of police stations in Colombo urban zone

The researcher highly appreciates the realistic decision made by the higher authorities of police to deploy 10 Sub Inspectors (SIs) to involve in the research in civil dresses, attached to several police stations within Colombo urban zone. At the completion of the research, the Department Of Police could access to various important information about gangs, their membership, their behavioral pattern, activities involved, geographical distribution etc., through the involvement of said team of Sub Inspectors. The researcher together with a committee of police officials have started a design of a Database Network in order to cover 7 police stations in Colombo so as to find appropriate actions as a follow up to the research. As of now, 10 police officials have been trained to perform in-depth assessments of gang behavior. This is one of the higher investment made for the 7 police stations, and a valuable resource of trained officers for such researches, it was possible due to the distributive policy structure prevailed in the Dept. of police.

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