Abstract

Children and crime – Guidelines for the development of an Index of Youth Crime Indicators

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A 2008 study by the author on children in conflict with the law in one of South Africa’s richest provinces, Gauteng, presented with, amongst other, significant directions towards the development of Indicators of youth crime in South Africa.

The Department of Social Development, who commissioned the study, were concerned about the effectiveness of their youth diversion programmes and wanted to begin evaluating these from the perspective of participating youth. They were also interested in obtaining a profile of youth crime and factors contributing towards crime in the province. The study results presented an interesting array of family and community factors that contributed to youth participating in crime but also assessed those aspects of programmes that appears to contribute towards behavioural and attitudinal change in participating youth.

The first part of the presentation proposes to present measures that were developed and employed in the above study that have the potential to be used in designing and testing future Indicators of youth offending. In the second part of the study the author presents methods that he successfully used in a 1999 Family Well being Indicator study and that could be suitable for developing Indicators of youth offending. This study used a five stage indicator development model incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to derive seven indices of family well being. The indicator system can be used to predict family quality of life by utilizing demographic data or survey data. It comprises of seven indicators and has been used to describe quality of life in a Botswana mining village.

The feasibility of this methodology for use in the development of youth and crime factor indicators as well as possible programme effectiveness indicators is explored.

**Sources:**

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