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Students' Gangs and their Impact on Academic Environment at Secondary Level of Education in Dhaka City: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Student gangs (SG) are active throughout the world and there is no exception in the milieu of Bangladesh but the number is still in a dark here. Recent years, the gangs are found very active in the capital.Gangs are alarmingly involving the secondary school going students of Bangladesh. The existence of student gang phenomena in the society is a major problem that needs to be looked into with a lot of concern, and conducting research to address evidently is a matter of urgency. The study tried to identify the present status of SG, leading causes and effects of the SG amongst the secondary level students of Dhaka city, and, their ways of involvement in gang. A qualitative research approach has been employed to conduct the study. Data was collected purposively from the teachers and students from the selected 06 secondary schools of the old Dhaka city areas. Data triangulation method was adopted for this research where in data was collected through self-administered semi-structured interview questionnaire, semi-structured interview questionnaire and FGD. Data was collected from 06 police officers, 03 journalist,12 secondary level teachers, 06 SMC representatives, 12 parents, 06 community representatives, and from 60 students. Among the students 12 of them were the gangs, 06 of them were the peers of the gangs. The result and detailed analysis of the study have brought out that there is a presence of gang (both in actively and inactively) within school premises. Gangs are mostly from class VIII to class X age ranged 10 to 19. Besides, gangs are used to perform different illegal job in their community and schools to keep their control over any situation and to fulfil the agenda oftheir boss. The study results also showed that family environment, political support, financial status and social issues are leading causes behind the involvement of student in gangs.This study also showed that SG negatively effects on students'psychology and academic environment of the school. Collaborative and constructive role of all related stakeholders are explored as remedy of the issue SG also policy recommendation and further investigation issues related to the study.

Keywords: Student gangs (SG), cause and impact, academic environment, secondary level education, qualitative study

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Introduction

Gangs issue is not a new matter of the present world. Since mid-nineties, the issue gangs were identified in a prevalent from (Juvenile Justine Bulletin, 1998). Different socio-cultural as well as economic issues push the youths to involve in gangs and also offering through lucrative opportunities to enjoy their life (Decker & Winkle, 1996). Hence, Gangs are active throughout the world and in Bangladesh the number of gangs is still in a dark but recent survey claimed that around 8000 to 10000 teenagers are active in gangs in the capital (Das, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Gang members commits different type of crimes at the school premises like they disturb throughout the school day through fighting, teasing, or disturbing the other students, teachers and administrators which hampers the educational environment and achievement of the students (Carson & Esbensen, 2017). Students involved in gangs almost belong to the same ideology and become loser academically as their focus goes on their group activities rather than academic attainment which badly affects them and their fellow mates also as they disturb even at the class time and some of them involves in different illegal job like trafficking, drug business etc. (Das, 2019). Student gangs, therefore uplift in the urban areas in almost every country, which enhance social crimes and violence (Studying Gangs, 1996). Gangs and their activities are also found outside of urban areas (Das, 2019). Thus, the study was undertaken to identify the ways of formation of student gangs and their consequences on education environment and what measures are being taken or need to be taken to tackle this alarming issue to ensure good academic climate for the secondary level students and other stakeholders of both school and society.

Scholars have projected that when gang operations go unnoticed and unmitigated, such outcomes as increased gang activities, uncertain learning conditions, and ineffectiveness of campus security become more pervasive (White, 2002b). By considering all of these, this study had conducted.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

In recent years, the presence of students' gangs in both inside and outside of school environment are being noticed in an alarming form, where most of the gang members are aged between 11 to 15 years, having multiple reasons of being involved in gangs, which is very shocking to the teenagers as it involves them in manifold social crimes that in a nutshell spoil the atmosphere of development (NCASA, 2010). Recently, the rising of teenage gangs is noticed through daily newspapers and police reports also published through different printing and mostly electronic media. As, Secondary school aged students are being mostly involved in gangs, therefore schools can perform a significant role to save the teenagers through social collaboration with family and inclusion to all (White, 2002a). This study has paved the possible ways of overcoming this emergent issue in the very early stage.

Besides, the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) goal-16 emphasize on peace, justice and inclusive institutions to ensure inclusive society for all (Morton, Pencheon & Squires,

2017). The findings of this research surely be a good resource for the concern authorities and stakeholders to address and trace out this SDG goal in the milieu of Bangladesh. In addition, this study has to uphold the current status of student gangs in schools, reasons of student's gangs, and its consequences on educational achievement through the young secondary level learners of Bangladesh. Besides, this study has come up the possible measures needed to be taken to save the teenagers from gangs. Hence, the study is significant.

Simultaneously, in Bangladesh, very few studies have been conducted regarding students' gangs and its impact on students' academic attainment. Therefore, this study is a very good start to uncover the issue 'student gangs' in the academic environment and most particularly to the secondary level teenager students. Henceforth, the study is significant.

Research Objective(s)

The cardinal aim of the research was to explore the actual scenario of the student gangs in the secondary level of education of Dhaka city in a holistic approach. In order to address the aim of this study the following specific objectives were considered –

- to explore the present situation of student gangs at the secondary schools of Dhaka city
- to identify the factors and the ways of involvement of the secondary level students in gangs of Dhaka city
- to explore the effect of student gangs on students' academic achievement at the secondary level

Conceptual Framework

Considering the reviewed literature, the following conceptual framework is being formed for the study. The study has two aspects accordingly the study will be conducted. Those are-

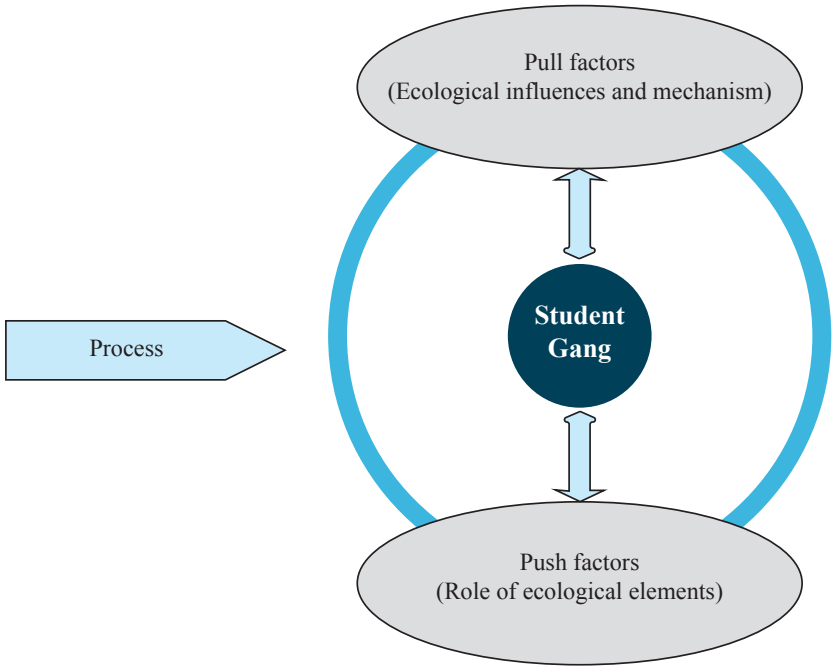
1. Process, and
2. Product.

These two aspects are important in forming and functioning of the gangs. Decker & Winkle (1996) stated for both push and pull factors responsible for involving the youths in gangs. The issues are:

1. Push factors (Why and how they are being engaged?)
2. Pull factors (How they involve others?)

Figure 1

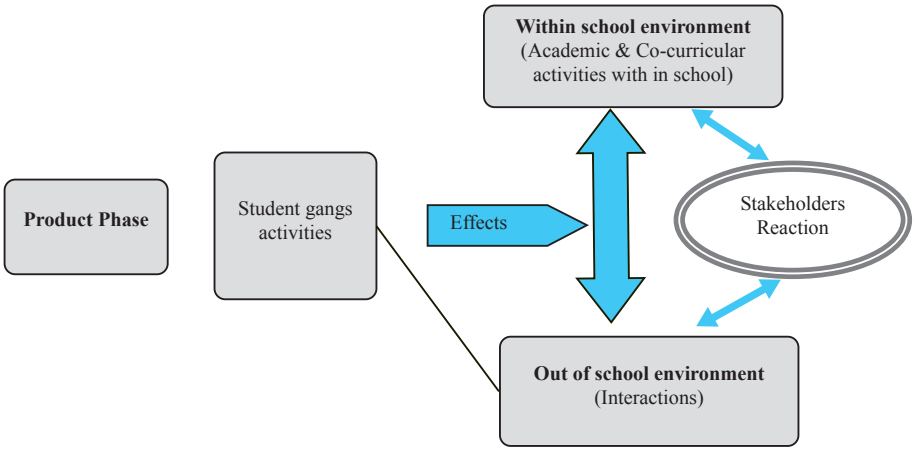
Conceptual frame work of gang formation



As product we generally observe or calculate the behaviour or activities or attitudes of the gangs within or outside of school environment that effects on students' academic environments.

Figure-2

Conceptual frame work of studying students'gangs



Research Methodology

This study was exploratory in nature as qualitative data has been collected. As per the view of Crescentini & Mainardi (2009) qualitative method is being used when the study is explorative and asked for an issue or description or to explore practical problems. At the same time, some quantitative data were also be adopted to make the study more credible and for the better judgments of this study. Among the secondary schools of the Old Dhaka city areas 06 secondary schools were selected purposively for the study.Data was collected from the students, their parents, teachers SMCs, police officials, journalists and community representatives using self-administrated interview questionnaire, semi-structured interview schedule and FGD Schedule. Collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis and presented through coding and sub-coding. The quantitative data wase analyzed using simple descriptive analysis.The scaffolding of the study is given in the following table.

Table-1

Scaffolding of the study

ResearchTools	Participants	Sample Size	Sampling Techniques	Data Analysis
Self-administrated Semi-structured questionnaire	Students (Normal)	48	Purposive and Random	Thematic
Semi-structured interview questionnaire	Students (Gangs)	12	Purposive	
Semi-structured interview questionnaire	Teacher	12	Purposive	
	Parents	12		
	Police officer (PO1-PO6)	06		
	Journalist (J1-J3)	03		
	SMCs (SMC1-SMC6)	06		
	Community representatives (CR1-CR6)	06		
	Peers(GP1-Gp6)	06		
FGD Questionnaire	Students (Homogeneous group)	03 (No.of FGD)	Purposive	

Results

The collected data of the study has been analyzed and the findings are explained according to the main themes of the study. The study was explored based on two major themes. The reasons of involving the students in gangs and their impact on academic environment of secondary school. The results of the study are presented below.

Students' gangs and perception about gangs

Respondents are cognizant about this term "gang". It is surprising that no one was found who is not familiar with the term gangs most particularly students' gangs. Secondary school going student age ranged 14-19 years are mostly involved in gangs. Gang members are active in the most of the secondary schools although the number varied from school to school depending on different socio-economic conditions. Girls are also involved in gangs indirectly. But still this rate is not so high. They mostly accompany with gangs. Along with the students from lower class families, lower-middle class, middle class and also from the higher-class families are getting involved in gangs.

Push factors in fluence to involve in gangs

The influential Push factors why the teenagers are getting involved in gangs are identified and the weighted are found as: Family Issues (40%)>Political Support (25%)>Abuse of Technology (15%)>Misuse of law (10%)>Easy earning (3%).

Family issues: parents less care and attachment with their children, lack of proper family education and ethics, poor financial status of the family, excess support to the children by their parents, parents' poor communication with schools are the common family issues.

Financial issues: gangs offer financial benefits to the teenagers which push the students.

Political issues: political shelter is a reason to involve the students in gangs

Socio-cultural issues: bad company and self-protection, ignorance from the society and apathy from the seniors and teachers, lack of social resistance, counselling and guidance, boredom towards schooling leads them to involve in gangs

T**echnological issues:** misuse of social media using electronics devices, online platform and influence of someone's lifestyle are the prime reasons of involving gangs

Abuse of law: political shelter encourages the students to be involved in gangs, abusing the law encourage the students to involve in gangs.

Pull factors: Factors attracts the students in gangs

The following common issues those are identified as pull factors that attracts the students in gangs

Give freedom

Use of power

Better chance for sexual harassment

Self-protection, and

To seek attention

Gang members views and view of the general learners are collected and explored why they are getting involved in gangs. The findings are mentioned in the following figure.

Figure 3

Gang members view on pull factors effects to involve in gangs

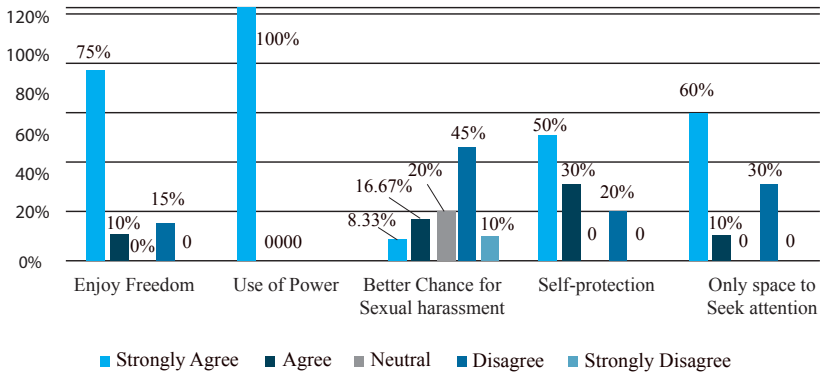
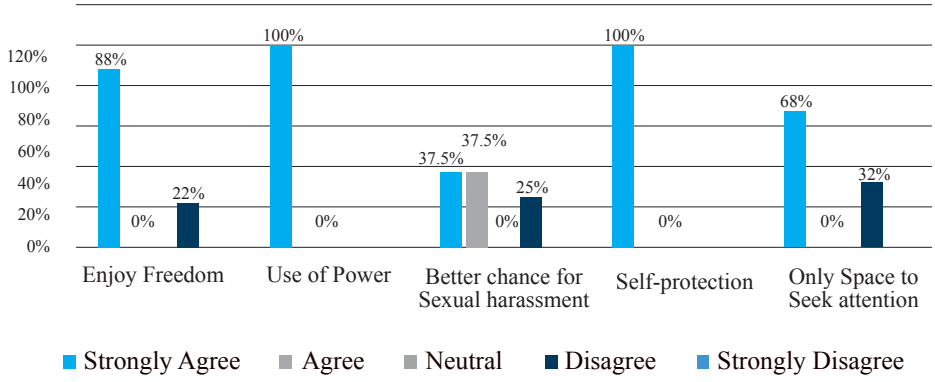


Figure 4

General learners view on pull factors effects to involve in gangs



Activities of the gangs

No positive works have been found in their activities; in fact, the activities of the gangs are explored from the two different perspectives. Those are as the followings:

1. Outside of the School,
2. Inside School Premises

Gang activities at the outside of the schools

At outside of school, gang members committed many negative activities. Some activities are: quarrelling, eve-teasing, drug selling & drug addiction, snatching, rape, extortion, disobeying parents and seniors, etc.

- Most of the quarrelling cases among students occurred among the slum dwelling boys as well as girls also. As a students, it is not desirable to attack someone in addition to quarrelling, but that is what is happening. One of the community representatives (CR2) said,

"Some teenagers boys move together with bikes and cycles. They used to quarrel most often in the community".

One of the respondents from FGD (FG1S4)

"They quarrel in the classroom and in the school. They threaten the general students and it keeps us in fear".

- Now days, eve-teasing has become a common affair. Mostly, girls become the victims of this. At a stage, girls and their guardians feel unsecure about female child. As a result, the girls live a life confined within a few boundaries and child marriage rates continue to rise.
- Drug s*elling and drug addiction involved them in gangs. One of the respondent journalists (J1) said,*

"Gangs are badly involved in drug buying and selling. They quarrel among themselves in managing drugs business also"

- Most of the snatchers in the city are now young boys. Those who are now of school age snatch people in public instead of going to school. The general learners (GL2S2) said,

"Gang members carry knife with them and they threaten the normal students and even misbehave with the teachers"

- Modern technologies (smart mobile, easy access porn sites etc.) are largely responsible for keeping the students in unhealthy sexual relationship. One of the police officers (PO3) said,

"Gang members are the threat of the girls. They disturb girls standing at the gate of the school. Recently, few cases have been filed regarding gang rape by the teenagers".

- Adolescents are not comparable to anyone else in terms of extortion. At first parents easily accept all their demands but at one stage their demands become very difficult to

become acceptable. Parents need to be careful about meeting these unjust and forced demands. One of the gang students said,

"We have to collect money from others and at times we involve in clash in distributing the money collected by others".

- Disobeying parents and seniors is a common character of the students who involved in gangs.

Gang activities inside of the schools

The student gangs do some violence inside the school also. Some of those violence's are, quarrelling (Senior-Junior, girls' issue, sports), eve-teasing, drug selling, extortion, threatening (General students and those who deny them or leave gangs), misconduct with seniors and teachers etc. The gangs most often-

- involve into fights with their classmates at school for no apparent reason or for very small reasons. It is very sad and unacceptable that a school going student would attack and injure another student in this way.
- It is sad but true that on the way to school, female students get teased by their male classmates. Many students drop out of school for fear of eve-teasing and dropout rate gradually increased.
- At present the students studying in the school are involved in drug use. Worse still, they are not only involved in drug use but also in selling drugs.
- Students often demand a lot of injustice from the school teachers which if the teachers refuse to accept then the students get involved in the movement. They do not even think that is their claim right or wrong. They are gathered only to fulfill their demands. One of the general learners said,

  "At times they demand for money. Anybody of the classroom may be their choice for extortion. They demand for10 taka. If we refuse, then they misbehave with us and sometimes they snatch our tiffin also".

- Many students in the school engage in threatening activities. They threat other students to involve in gangs. If any of them wants to leave out their gangs, they threat rest of them and make them to be forced to stay in the gangs. More over, many students behave rudely and make threat to the fourth-grade staffs of the school which is a great shame becoming a student. One of the general learners said,

"We feel afraid to come in the schools due to gangs. We feel mental pressure due to the gang members. We could not concentrate on study properly due to the gangs".

- They misbehave seniors and teachers. Their disrespectful behavior, makes others vulnerable and helpless.

Gangs' effects on Academic Environment of the School

Gangs has many negative consequences on academic environment of the school. Student gangs negatively affects students' psychological, academic arena of the school, hence the environment.

The psychological perspective of gangs effect on educational environment at school

- Students (general) feel fear to come in the school
- Hampers learner's concentration on classwork (use mobile in the classroom and see pornography) and examination
- Forced students (mostly girls) to leave school or drop out (Ragging, teasing, extortion, snatching tiffin etc.)
- Create curiosity towards gangs among the general learners
- Forced others students (fellow mates/juniors) to join their team and disturb those who want to ignore or leave them.
- Extra tension of the parents

Environmental perspective of gangs effect on educational environment at school:

- Break institutional rules, misconduct with the teachers
- Involve in illegal and unsocial job (quarrelling, teasing, selling drugs)
- Loss of time and classroom activities
- Spoil the environment of the community

Academic perspective of gangs effect on educational environment at school:

- Decrease the academic performance of the gangs
- Impact negatively on their learner's academic performance

In a nutshell, the activities of gangs in the school are very negative to the students to develop their academic achievement.

Discussion

Gangs, most particularly the student gangs are very active in Dhaka city. School going teenagers mostly aged between 14-16 years are getting involved in gangs. White, 2002a; Lor, 2003, Al-Mamun, 2020, and Mun, (n.d) explored almost the similar studies in their study. They found that, young boys aged between 10-18 years are getting involved in gangs not only in Dhaka but throughout the country. Gangs are known by different titles like, '007' 'Amma group', 'Five star'etc.are found in this study. Al-Mamun, 2020; Helal, 2019; & Mun, (n.d.) found in their study that, gangs are active in different name throughout the city like, 007, Lara

Dey, Disco Boys, Power Boys, Seven stars, Nine M.M. Boys, Jumman Gangs, Dangerous Boys, Gang Star, Mafia etc.

Teenagers form peers first from their locality and they move together considering their security and protection and gradually they involve in gangs consisting of peers and other senior partners. Beazley (2013) also found almost the similar findings from their study.

According to the National Institute of Justice (2011), students gang consists of at least three members and they commit different crimes in their area. Almost similar findings are explored through this study as secondary school going teenagers join together in different number and they usually commit different offensive activities at the community and in the educational institutions like, disturb other students, spoil the environment, tease girls, quarrelling with others, threatening other students and community people, etc.

Students are getting involved in gangs as they feel to get protection, power, and freedom in the community. The similar findings are also explored by White, 2002a; & Lor, 2003 in their study. Gangs' members feel that they get huge opportunity to enjoy their life as found from the study. Decker & Winkle, (1996) found almost the similar findings in their study.

Gangs are occurring due to different push factors as explored from the study. Different issues e.g., poor family bondage, lucrative financial offers, abuse of technology, misuse of law, poor socio-cultural practices push the secondary level teenagers to involve in gangs. Parnell, 2013 explored multiple reasons as push factors those attract the teenagers in gangs. NCASA (2010) also explored the similar reasons of involving the teenagers in gangs. Al-Mamun(2020) also explored poor parenting as a reason of teenager involvement in gangs.

Political issue is identified as a big reason of involving the secondary school going students in gangs. The similar results have been found by Das (2019) and Al-Mamun (2020) in their study that, political shelter is a reason of pushing the teenagers to involve in gangs.

Excess and unwise use of technology, most particularly the Facebook, YouTube, TikTok influences the young teenagers to involve in gangs. Through different online media and channel, they come to know about gangs and their activities. It motivates some of the youths to involve in gangs. Al-Mamun (2020) explored almost the same findings in their research.

Like boys, girls are also getting indirectly involved in gangs and they are still in the dark but helped the gang members to conduct different activities in the schools. Das (2019) explored the involvement of the girls in gangs also. Early dating, poor family bondage as broken families are also identified as the reason of girls' involvement in gangs as identified by Juvenile Justice Bulletin (1998). In this study, the poor family bondage and the opportunity of sex attached both the boy's and girls to be involved in gangs.

Students who involve in gangs, they cannot perform good result in their academic examinations. The study findings reveal that, gangs are the backbencher and many of them are dropout students and some of them cannot continue till university level. Howell (2010) conducted a study and found almost the similar findings that the teenagers who are engaged in gangs they cannot spend more time on study. Hence, they perform poor in their examination.

Teenagers are engaging in gangs due to the poor concentration of the family, community and schools towards them. Parents poor contact with their children and schools also a reason of engaging the teenagers in gangs as identified. Mun (n.d) also explored the similar findings in his study that parents in these days could not get plenty of time to spend with their children. Therefore, the children get freedom and they choose their own company and at times they engaged in gangs,

Along with some push factors, some lucrative opportunities as pull factors attract the teenagers to be involved in gangs. Some issues are identified in the study and those are like freedom, use of power, to earn fame, ensure self-protection, good chance for sex etc. Al-Mamun (2020) explored also the same push factors that motivates the teenagers to involvein gangs. Gang members badly need of self-protection and hence many of them involved in gangs.

Gangs, literally perform different offensive activities in both inside and outside of the schools. Within schools they disturb other general students, disobey their teachers, sell drugs, teasing girls' students, threatening, apply ragging, extortion, etc. Al-Mamun (2020) explored also the same activities performed by the gangs.

Gang members carry different local weapons in the school and they used to threaten others using those weapons. This makes the educational compound ferocious to the general learners. The learners along with their parents also stay in tension about their children. Mun (n.d) explored that gang members carry diverse local weapons and they commit different crimes in the schools. Gangs outside of the school compound commit multiple crime sand even murder. Mun (n.d) in his study explored the similar opinion from the law enforce ment authority that the students gang members are directly involve in some murder case allegation as juvenile offence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations have been made on the basis of the opinion of the respondents of the study. The recommendations are:

- Focus should be given on positive relationship among the family members in family
- Parents should invest more quality time for their children
- Community leaders must be sincere about their responsibility to develop good citizen for their community
- Both family, educational institutions & community should arrange healthy cultural activities for the development of the students.
- School must arrange different co-curricular activities to keep students busy
- Appropriate counseling and guidance service should be introduced in the schools through the professionals. Learners must be informed about the negative consequences of gangs and addiction to drugs.
- Gang students should be considered as 'challenge' not as 'problem'. Then the learners involved in gangs will get positive space for correction.

Conclusion

Student gang is a serious social issue. Gangs hamper the educational environment with in schools and makes the guardians under anxiety about the safety of their children. Gangs are the threat for the normal learners and most particularly for the girls. School authorities, law enforcement agencies, community leaders and parents are trying to take back the students from gangs. But still some difficulties are over there.The recommendation of this study will definitely be a good document to take necessary and effective policy led decisions to tackle gangs from the schools and from the community.

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