

**Communication pattern among Juveniles:
A case Study in Rehabilitation Center for Juveniles
in Asrama Bukit Senyum, Johor Bahru, Malaysia**

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Abstract. *Social interactions are not merely representing good actions among people in the society. Criminality is part of the interaction that may harm the social life and impact someone's behavior. When we are talking about criminal, we cannot overlook that children may involve in this situation. They may do something improper against norm and rules in the society. This condition brings them into rehabilitation where other norm and rules applied. As the consequence, they experience different interaction and communication acts inside the wall. This paper search how juveniles interact and communicate among themselves during staying in rehabilitation center of Asrama Bukit Senyum. This circumstance cause a different pattern of communication and interaction applied where new 'culture' applied. Symbolic Interactionism Theory was applied in order to reveal how verbal and non-verbal communications occur. This study reveals that juveniles have their own symbol and code in communicating among them. Norm and rules applied in rehabilitation center of Asrama Bukit Senyum does not merely limit their communication acts.*

Keywords: juvenile, communication pattern, social interactions

Introduction

This paper highlights the interactions and communication patterns among juveniles who are rehabilitated in Asrama Bukit Senyum, Johor. Authors are looking at the phenomenon of criminality done by youth in the age of 10 to 18 that causing them put into rehabilitation center, as they cannot be jailed. Living in the normal society is far different compare to any other places as rehabilitation center. One thing is that they are considered different from any

other youths on their ages due to criminal act they have done, another thing is that they have to keep on their life in the society with different situation, as in rehabilitation center.

Living in the different circumstance as the former place where they live will set them into a new construction of values. Values of being part of the community, having new life that they never had it before, experiencing new things and trying to rehabilitate themselves to be a better persons. This writing will give brief description on how new values through interaction and communication among juveniles in the rehabilitation center has created new pattern of communication among them. Signs and symbols are created and constructed, as well as nick name.

This paper is divided into several sections as (1) review on previous studies toward juvenile pertaining their cases, interaction and communication, (2) brief introduction about interaction, communication and symbolic interactionism theory, (3) discussion and (4) conclusion.

Review on studies toward juveniles

There are numbers of studies that focused on the identification of the triggers or reasons why criminality among children happened (Kamal Ab. Hamid 1998). There are some factors that influence people to do such a crime including personality aspect, perception, and socio-economy background. Kamal (1998) had explored a case study to indentify juveniles profile who dealt with criminal on his study which reveal that crime among juvenile are triggered by low educational, emotional matter, family problem(s) and environmental factors. Other than that, psychological stress also become one strong factor that may trigger the criminality. Karin & Grethe (1999) stated that the unstable of psycho-social, episcosomatic and emotion may influence children's mental health. These facts become the basic.

Some scholars as Kamal (1998) and Mahadir *et al.* (2004) run study pertaining types of crime by juveniles such as drugs, criminal, vandalism, skip classes, free sex, run away from home and so forth. According to Lal (1995), every individual can subjectively understand comprehensively the situation where they live. Hofstede *et al.* (1999) carried out a research pertaining prostitution among children. The study was conducted in Minnesota

which revealed the reason why such prostitution occurred, and Hall (1904) stated that those children need more attention and love from their family, they do not have a permanent place to stay and some other social aspects.

Sanger *et al.* (2000) conducted a study about communication behavior towards 78 juveniles who are currently in the process of rehabilitation. The ethnography study was done to comprehensively interpret the communication pattern among juveniles in order to share information as well as cultural values among them. By referring the constructed communication, revealed by Sanger *et al.*, there are several factors that should be paid more attention about their interaction as they tend to create their own way of interaction and communication through symbols. Humber and Snow (2001), based on their findings, stated that there is a significant relations between verbal communication and language that they use in the interactions. Humber and Snow detected what so called as language disorders that might lead to criminality.

Malone and Crowston (1994) conducted study on juvenile by focusing on cases on juveniles and how they carry their daily communication. Based on data gathered, Malone and Crownston finally concluded that communication pattern, especially among juveniles, can be created and constructed. The well creation of communication pattern is important to conduct the communication interaction in the community on what they supposed to act and do. The fact that they have created they own communication pattern has helped their interaction, among juveniles themselves, during stay in the dormitory in order to undergo the detention.

Juveniles' life during the detention in the rehabilitation center is closely similar with their experience in their former real life, they have such interaction and communication with other people. The difference might be in the psychological matter with the fact that they are not as free as days before living in the rehabilitation center. Head of rehabilitation center and its staff play important role in the progress of juveniles' detention (Ariffin 2002). Ariffin focused on the study about communication between the head of rehabilitation center and the staff which resulted that good communication may indicate good interaction and activity. From the study we can get point on how important the proper communication among individual in such an institution to have a good/proper interaction for them.

Studies toward juveniles were conducted by using several method as Lukiati *et al.* (2005) studied about pattern of communication among juvenils descriptively by document analysis, interview and questionnaires as data gathering method. Triangulation helped them to get comprehensive understanding on what they search. Whilst, Kamal (1998) using quantitative and qualitative approaches to study about rehabilitate juveniles. Ariffin (2002) did his study in Hulu Langat area, Malaysia, by conducting series of interview in order to gain depth data and understanding about juveniles' profile.

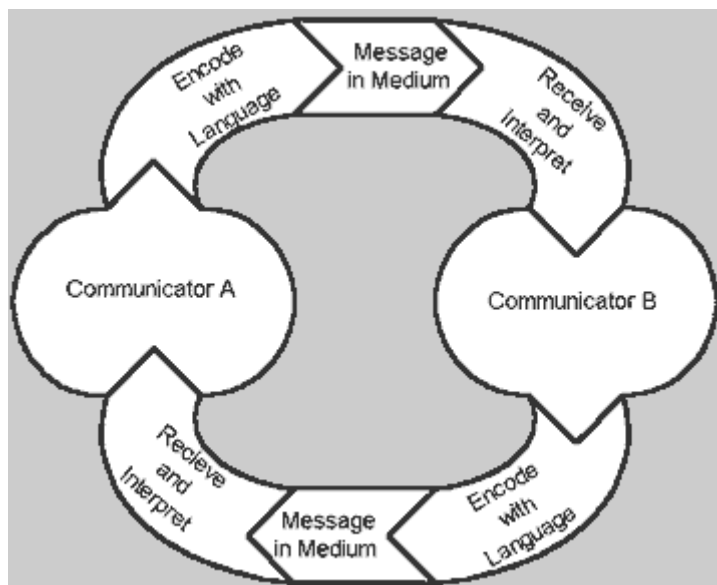
The studies described above has become foundation on this research. Considering that juveniles are still in the range of young ages, therefore they are not ditempatkan in the prison/jail instead. They will undergo such a detention, not in the form of sentence but rehabilitation, in some length of time based on the case. Speaking about the juvenile will live in the same roof with the other juveniles portray that they face a new circumstance as their social interaction. Interaction among those who live in the rehabilitation center might be similar or different with their former interaction. The interaction in the rehabilitation center may create new pattern of communication, verbally and non verbally. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify how the juveniles interact and how is the applied communication pattern in Asrama Bukit Senyum, Johor.

Communication and Interaction: Study on Communication Pattern among Juveniles

As people mingle with others, they need communication in order to deliver message and information. Communication pattern, in this case, is formulated of basic elements in communication in order to support juveniles' daily interaction by using signs, values and norms that are constructed by juveniles themselves. We can take this as a set of communication tools that purposively created to conduct communication and interaction among juveniles as what they expected and constructed. They may create symbols, meanings and message that delivered in different way.

During their interaction, communication may occur in the form of symbol or sign both verbal and non verbal. In the administration office, communication is seen as something pertaining to behavior which constructed how people act, how individu seek and share

information with others and how they cope with the situation in rehabilitation center. Here we later on can see how communication by using symbols that create meaning and values is important in the interaction.



Model of Transaction in communication

Source: <http://davis.foulger.info> (2009)

In this study, we analyzed and observed the applied communication aspects as verbal, non verbal as well as shared signs and symbols. In every interaction, non verbal communication also plays an important role in delivering and creating messages. Basically, communication is the process in which message is exchanged. Signs and symbols are created, and interpreted by the counterpart, as shown in the model above.

Objective of this study is to identify juveniles' daily communication pattern in the rehabilitation center. Data were gathered by conducting focus groups discussion and non participant observation toward juveniles in Asrama Bukit Senyum, Johor Bahru, Johor. Symbolic Interactionism Theory was used as the foundation of the study in order to get comprehensive understanding of the data pertaining communication pattern applied by juveniles in the rehabilitation center. Mead (1982) as the scholar who formulated Symbolic Interactionism Theory stated that human are using symbols in order to express their conscious thought, self understanding and interaction with the society.

Symbolic interaction theory rests in the last analysis on three simple premises; the first is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them, the second premises is that the meaning of such things is derived from the social interaction that one has with one's fellows, and the last premises is that these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer 1969, 2). Mead sees Symbolic Interactionism as a presentation of gestures and a response to the meaning of those gestures which become part of the ongoing action (ibid, 8).

Symbolic interactionism is grounded on a number of basic ideas that refer to human groups or societies, social interaction, objects, the human as an actor, human action and the interconnection of the interaction or actions (Blumer 1969, 6). Symbolic Interactionism involves interpretation of the action which is understood by the social groups (Ibid, 8). This means that symbols are decoded and encoded which reflect everything surrounding human interaction.

Symbolic Interactionism Theory was set to be the basic guidelines in conducting the research. Focusing on the communication interaction among juveniles in Asrama Bukit Senyum, this study was carried out by conducting four focus group discussions with 20 (twenty) juveniles as informants that were picked based on purposive sampling method. Discussions are divided into four groups consisting of five informants for each with similar characteristics; age of 14-17 years old, male, Malay and under rehabilitation status in Asrama Bukit Senyum. After data gathering, data were transcribed and analyzed. The next section is the discussion part which describes the result of the study.

Discussion: Focus Group Discussion with Juveniles

Juveniles in Asrama Bukit Senyum regularly interact with themselves in the form of dialogue, playing a game, sport, having meals and so forth. They informally interact with their peers in the rehabilitation center. New information is delivered by juveniles who are in the stage of behavioral probation. This study revealed that whenever they, juveniles, find any difficulties, challenges or problems in their daily life, they will directly report to the administrative personnel or share the experience with their own peers, it depends. For some of

the informants prefer to directly report any difficulties or problem to the administrative personel. Meanwhile the rest feel hesitate to talk to the personel and prefer to share and talk with their own friends for they feel free and easy to give a story.

Besides, they also tend to share information by using signs and symbols that constructed and used by juveniles in the Asrama Bukit Senyum as stated below:

“Kita kerap menggunakan bahasa isyarat atau isyarat tangan supaya tidak dikesan dengan kakitangan.”

“We usually use signs, so that personel will not understand”

“Tidak mahu aktiviti rakan-rakan dihidu oleh kakitangan pusat perlindungan.”

“No, we do not want the personel smell our activity”

It shows that they have their own story among them, as stated by an informants as mentioned below:

“Lebih sulit. Ada kerahsiaan. Tidak mudah kakitangan mengesan aktiviti melanggar peraturan. Contoh bawa masuk rokok secara salah.”

“We keep a secret. It is not easy for the personel to know or see our mis-behavior such as taking cigarette into this *asrama*”

During the observation, this study has concluded that juveniles created some terms to communicate among them as described below:

<i>Panadol</i>	: Punishment when juveniles wear hat in the bathroom
<i>Sepitol</i>	: Taking cigarette into the room
<i>Bocor</i>	: Lack of food
<i>Payung</i>	Taking food into the room
<i>Masam</i>	: Asking for cigarette to the personel
<i>Pepsi</i>	: Tap water

Juveniles constantly use the terms during daily conversation. Besides, informants also informed that they give a nick name to address some of the personel as described below:

<i>Bumbreng</i>	: warder
<i>Tembok paras</i>	: Door man
<i>Taeko 3 sendok</i>	: Cook

They do not even recognize who created the names for the first time as their senior in the rehabilitation center informed them once they are started to interact and mingle.

“Kadangkala apabila selepas waktu pejabat, melihat pejabat memeriksa kami, kami juga menggunakan bahasa isyarat di antara kami.”

“Sometimes after office hours, when the personel do recheck toward us, we use the name and terms as signs among us”

Signs are used among juveniles when they intend to deliver message such as direct inspection or convey information non verbally. By using these signs, juveniles do not have to worry that their conversation will be detected by the personel. Here are some signs using hand(s) used in interaction and communication among juveniles:



Apai / waving hand from left to right : Expressing I don't know



Pointing by index finger : Asking people to take care of something



Cicak / clench : To hit people at neck

This study also found that juveniles have no difficulties in communicating with the as among themselves well as personel. They tend to use regular Malay as any of their ages speaking.

“Ada di antara bahasa rojak atau slanga. asalnya daripada rakan sebaya yang nakal sebelum kami masuk ke pusat perlindungan ini.”

“There are some slank words came from our peers that formerly here in the rehabilitation center”

During the discussion, informants stated that they regularly discuss about what was happening at the past, about their cases and reason why they come into the rehabilitation center. They do not really think that talking about family or family problem as something necessary as topic during interaction, they tend to keep the story about their family rather than share it.

“Kami berbual dan memaklumkan secara lisan mengapa kami ditempatkan disini. Kami semua mendapati percampuran dengan rakan sebaya yang dianggap nakal membuatkan kami ditempatkan disini. Ahli keluarga tidak mengendahkan tentang pergerakan kami. Ada di antara kami yang mempunyai ahli keluarga yang besar.”

“We have a chat and talk about how do we got here. We realized that all among us just did mistake, therefore we are now here. Our family do not really care about us, some of us have a big family, in fact.”

When the question about obstacles during living and interacting in Asrama Bukit Senyum, all participants agree that they are really enjoy staying there. They found no difficulties in communicating. They feel like living with the family.

“Kami tidak pernah bergaduh malah menganggap kami adalah satu keluarga. Yang baru datang tidak pernah kami ragging kerana kakitangan selalu memperhatikan kami.”

“We have never fight, we are like a family. We never bully new friends here, the personel are watching us.”

They tend to give nick name to one another that make them like a real brothers. The same condition has brought them into a new circumstance where they feel like having new family, care to each other.

Conclusion Remarks

From the focus group discussion conducted toward juveniles, this study can conclude that during living in the rehabilitation center, juveniles are trying to cope with the circumstance by interacting and mingle with themselves as well as with the personnel. In order to have good understanding and communication, they tend to create and construct new terms, signs and symbols among them, juveniles, for sometimes hide what they are talking about from the personnel. They share stories and experience and create new values of having new family there, so that they will not feel so lonely and marginalized. Here we can see that interaction by using symbols and constructed language, both verbal and non verbal, are applied among juveniles. So, speaking about values and new values, the juveniles are creating their own way of communication in rehabilitation center by constructing their own values.

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