

Article

## Social Studies Educators' Evaluations About Children's Delinquency and Preventive Measures

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**Abstract:** This study explores the perspectives of children at risk of social exclusion (RSE) regarding their everyday experiences in kindergarten. Using semi-structured, developmentally appropriate interviews, we examined the views of 48 children (M = 70.32 months) identified by teachers as vulnerable due to social, emotional, or contextual circumstances. Overall, children described kindergarten as a generally positive and enjoyable environment, emphasizing friendships, play, and familiar routines. However, many also expressed concerns related to limited autonomy and agency. Rules were frequently perceived as restrictive rather than supportive, and penalties often involved social or physical constraints, such as exclusion from activities or temporary isolation. Children also reported difficulties identifying consistent encouragement or available support from teachers, except during moments involving strong emotional distress. These findings highlight the ongoing need for inclusive, responsive, and autonomy-supportive pedagogical practices in early childhood education. The results suggest that children not only desire opportunities for participation but also need to feel visible, recognized, and respected as legitimate contributors to the educational process. Such reflections indirectly point to possible gaps in the quality of educational practice and the professional competencies of educators. Adults' assumptions about knowing what is best for children may unintentionally restrict children's participatory rights, particularly for those already at risk of social exclusion, who may have fewer opportunities to influence their learning environment.

**Keywords:** Children's Autonomy; Children's Perceptions; Social Interaction; Support; Vulnerable Children

### 1. Introduction

According to the definition given in the legal literature, persons under the age of 18 who are preparing to become individuals in the social sense are referred to as "children" [1]. Accordingly, it can be said that the child, whose cognitive, affective, and physical development continues, is in a period of life that is open to all kinds of mistakes and errors. In the transition from childhood to adolescence, the child entering a new developmental period encounters many new cognitive, physical, and social changes. While sometimes children's mistakes help them to find the right solution, sometimes this situation turns into ongoing behavioral habit. In this case, children develop an undesirable (antisocial) behavioral tendency. If children with antisocial tendencies do not receive the necessary guidance and counselling, they will be drawn into crime. In fact, as Burt [2] stated, the transformation of antisocial tendencies into a position that requires legal intervention is defined as "juvenile delinquency". Similarly, Barker [3] defines juvenile delinquency as the situation in which people below the age of legal responsibility break the law in certain types of offences. As mentioned above, the tendency of the child, who is in a developmental stage in

every respect, to show a tendency towards maladaptive behavior's that are considered as crimes, especially during adolescence, carries important risks. According to Aktu and İlhan [4], during adolescence a person discovers who he/she is and searches for new roles to form his/her sexual, occupational and social identity. As a result of this search, children who do not receive adequate educational and counselling services may be drawn into crime.

Juvenile delinquency is a major social problem today. Indeed, juvenile delinquency is not only a national problem but also a global phenomenon. In the legal literature, juvenile delinquency refers to a wide range of disapproved behaviors of young people and adolescents, which are frowned upon by society and for which some form of punishment or corrective measure is justified in the public interest [5]. However, it is important to go beyond legal measures and address the underlying factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency. These factors include poverty, lack of access to education and health services, family dysfunction and exposure to violence and crime. In addition, addressing juvenile delinquency requires a multidimensional approach, involving not only the legal system but also stakeholders such as parents, schools and communities [6]. It is also crucial to prioritise the welfare and development of society in order to provide support and guidance to children to prevent them from engaging in criminal behaviour, to effectively address juvenile delinquency and to protect children from involvement in criminal activities. The causes of juvenile delinquency, which is one of the most important social problems in today's society, include factors such as family problems, inadequate education, economic difficulties, peer environment and role models [7]. Therefore, measures need to be taken at the stage before children are drawn into crime. These measures include healthy communication between families and their children, valuing them and listening to their responsibilities, and providing supervision and guidance services [8]. In addition to these, investing in children's education and future can also prevent them from being dragged into crime [9,10]. According to these evaluations, it is very important to examine the issue of prevention of juvenile delinquency in detail and to consider the opinions and evaluations of educators who are responsible for the education of children. Accordingly, this study will examine the underlying reasons why juvenile delinquency occurs, based on the perspectives of educators.

### 1.1. Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

Children are at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents because of a variety of factors, each of which needs to be examined in detail. In particular, economic, family and social factors, as well as the child's educational status, peer environment and personal characteristics, are some of the most important factors that can influence the child's vulnerability to offending. It is important to assess these factors comprehensively in order to develop a management plan that addresses the child's strengths and weaknesses [11]. A review of the literature on juvenile delinquency shows that the first studies began in the 1920s. Bridges [12] stated that the mental and physical structure of the individual is the main factor in juvenile delinquency, and that the past and present living environment may also have an effect. Rondelli et al. [13] also stated that the environment and the personality traits of children are important factors in criminal tendencies and stressed that the family plays a key role in eliminating negative influences on children. In the 1960s, there were studies which emphasised that psychological and guidance practices should be implemented in order to reintegrate juvenile delinquency into society [14,15]. Despite the development of psychological treatment and rehabilitation services, Kraus [16] emphasised that the psychological treatment of juvenile delinquency is an important issue for their reintegration into society and that the most important thing is to get the child to behave in a positive way in the phase before the juvenile delinquency. Moore and Arthur [17] stated that juvenile delinquency is a common scientific problem in sociology and psychology, according to the results of the systematic review of research conducted for half a century, and emphasised that it is a behavioral disorder that occurs as a result of social and economic conditions or temporary adjustment difficulties during adolescence. In the 1990s, research on the causes of juvenile delinquency increased and the causes of delinquency began to be categorised into three main factors: family, environment and individual characteristics [18–22].

It is possible to list family-related factors in child delinquency such as failure to fully fulfil parental duties [23], severe neglect/abuse [24], parental delinquency [25], forced labor [26], early parental loss [27], emotional inadequacy and inadequate parental control [28]. Among the risk factors created by the family, the strongest are domestic violence and insufficient parental control due to parents' antisocial behaviour tendencies [28,29]. Psychopathology in first-degree relatives and poor communication within the family are considered important risk factors for juvenile delinquency [30]. Indeed, situations such as the presence of high emotional expression in the family and the state of conflict in family relationships and interactions can lead to psychopathological behaviors in adolescents,

such as harming themselves and then others [31].

Factors related to the social environment [32], and the economic level of the social environment in which the child lives [26], low level of social education [33], incompatibility and communication breakdown between neighbor's [34,35] are effective in children's involvement in crime. Gönültaş and Hilal [36] emphasised that children's tendency to commit crimes occurs rapidly in people exposed to the migration phenomenon and in settlements receiving migrants, and stressed that families should support the cultural adaptation processes of children exposed to migration. In addition, it has been found that children who start school education tend to commit crimes according to their level of commitment to school [26].

Among the factors related to individual characteristics in children dragged into crime, the reasons such as children's age [37,38], gender [39], cognitive level [40], psychomotor learning level [10] and problem-solving level [41] are effective. According to the results of studies on juvenile delinquency [37,38], it was found that the majority of juvenile delinquency consisted of (adolescent) males between the ages of 14 and 18. Cuervo et al. [37] found in their research that the rate of being dragged into crime was higher for boys between the ages of 14-18 than for girls, while the rate of being dragged into crimes against the person increased as the age of girls increased.

## 1.2. Juvenile Delinquency and Social Studies Curriculum

Juvenile delinquency has become one of the major problems both in our country and worldwide. In fact, according to the report published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) on Child Delinquency and Child Victims for the years 2018–2022, the number of juvenile delinquents was 152,000 in 2018 and 207,000 in 2022, an increase of 36% [42]. According to these data, it has become clear that the rate of juvenile delinquency in Türkiye is seriously increasing and that it is essential to take the necessary protective and preventive measures.

Children show different behaviors depending on their family, social environment and genetic structure. Accordingly, children are drawn into crime for various reasons and factors [26]. In this regard, understanding the problem of juvenile delinquency in all its aspects and taking the necessary protective measures depends on a good analysis of the causes of crime and the process of being dragged into crime [31,43]. In order to carry out these analyses and evaluations, the opinions of experts on juvenile delinquency gain importance. In addition, the evaluation of the educational curriculum that children receive at the basic education level in terms of objectives, outcomes and content is important for the prevention of juvenile delinquency [44,45]. Accordingly, there is no direct information or expression about juvenile delinquency in the social studies curriculum. However, it can be said that the social studies curriculum serves the purpose of preventing juvenile delinquency because it includes subjects such as citizenship education and values education [46–48] and knowledge, skills and outcomes such as justice, peace, self-discipline, socio-cultural harmony and social responsibility are included in the basic philosophy of the curriculum [49]. It is thought to be important for social studies educators to be able to provide the necessary guidance in terms of determining the current situation and needs in terms of determining what kind of solutions they have for the reasons why students with problematic behaviors exhibit these behaviors and what measures should be taken before they become involved in crime [50].

It is believed that this research will serve the goals of identifying the factors that cause children to be dragged into crime and taking measures within the scope of preventive, protective and psychosocial support services and reintegrating children into society under the title 'Child' in the 12<sup>th</sup> Development Plan published by the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye in 2023 [49]. In addition, it is expected that it will also serve the objectives of creating educational environments that support child safety and well-being in order to prevent children from turning to crime under the title of 'Education' in the same Development Plan.

Contemporary research and national policy documents reveal that juvenile delinquency remains a persistent social concern, influenced by family background, social environment, and individual characteristics [26,32]. Despite the increasing awareness of these risk factors, there is still a limited focus on preventive strategies within the formal education system, particularly in the social studies curriculum. Although the curriculum emphasizes citizenship and values education-including justice, peace, self-discipline, socio-cultural harmony, and social responsibility [49] Ministry of National Education, 2023; there is no direct and explicit framework addressing juvenile delinquency. This gap justifies the need for a systematic evaluation of how educational environments can proactively prevent children from drifting into crime. Moreover, the 12<sup>th</sup> in 2023 Development Plan of Türkiye underscores the urgency of addressing child-related risks by promoting preventive, protective, and psychosocial support ser-

vices under the “*Child*” dimension, and emphasizes the creation of safe and supportive educational environments under the “*Education*” dimension [49]. These policy priorities highlight the necessity of studies that bridge the gap between theoretical policy objectives and practical strategies within schools.

### 1.3. Research Questions

In the context of the above, the aim of this research is to evaluate the reasons that lead children to crime and the measures that should be taken according to the opinion of educators. Depending on this basic purpose, answers were sought to the following questions;

RQ1: What are the main reasons that lead children to commit crimes, according to social studies teachers?

RQ2: How do social studies teachers evaluate the measures implemented in the current educational environment (e.g., curriculum, values education and school counselling services) in terms of preventing children from committing crimes?

RQ3: If the current measures are insufficient, what additional measures should be taken, according to social studies teachers?

RQ4: How do social studies teachers evaluate the social studies curriculum in terms of preventing children from being drawn into crime?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Design

This research was designed as a qualitative study. The research was conducted according to the descriptive phenomenology design, which aims to understand the reasons that push children to commit crimes and the measures that should be taken based on the opinions of social studies educators. In descriptive phenomenology research, the most fundamental point is to determine the experiences of individuals about any event [51]. However, although the descriptive phenomenology design limits the experiences of individuals to only one phenomenon, it also examines the perceptions and meanings that individuals develop after their experiences [52,53]. By categorising the experiences of social studies educators under specific themes, this study sought to determine how they assessed juvenile delinquency, the causes of juvenile delinquency, protective measures, and the meaning of this experience for them, since the phenomenological model allows an in-depth exploration of individuals’ lived experiences and perceptions, making it possible to reveal the essence of how educators interpret and make sense of juvenile delinquency within the educational context.

### 2.2. Participants

The research group was formed using the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods [53]. In determining the research group, the researcher’s professional acquaintance with the participant group, the fact that the participant group is known to have certain academic knowledge and interest in juvenile delinquency, and the fact that the participant group has certain professional experience are listed as criteria created by the researcher, since the selection of participants with both practical teaching experience and academic expertise was considered crucial for obtaining rich, diverse, and in-depth data regarding the causes of juvenile delinquency, the effectiveness of preventive measures, and the role of the social studies curriculum in this context. The demographic information of the social studies educators who participated in the study is presented in **Table 1**.

The research group consisted of teachers (10) and academics (8) working in the Ministry of National Education (MNE) and Council of Higher Education (CHE) in the provinces of Istanbul (3), Izmir (3), Sakarya (2), Adana (1), Aydın (1), Ankara (1), Afyon (1), Diyarbakır (1), Kocaeli (1), Muş (1), Siirt (1), Rize (1), Van (1) provinces from Türkiye. 9 of the participants were female and the other 9 were male. Eight of the participants were between the ages of 40–50, 6 were between the ages of 30–40, 4 were between the ages of 20–30, and the average work experience was between 10–20 years (**Table 1**). The real names of the research group were masked for the safety of the participants, and a sequential code order was created for each participant.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of the Participants.

Nu	Code	Gender	Age Range	Education Status	Province	Institution	Seniority
1.	E1	Male	30-40	Bachelor's	İstanbul	MNE	11-15 years
2.	E2	Male	40-50	Master's	İzmir	CHE	+21 years
3.	E3	Male	30-40	Doctorate	Diyarbakır	CHE	5-10 years
4.	E4	Male	20-30	Master's	Afyon	MNE	5-10 years
5.	E5	Male	40-50	Doctorate	Muş	CHE	16-20 years
6.	E6	Male	40-50	Bachelor's	Sakarya	MNE	+21 years
7.	E7	Male	40-50	Master's	İzmir	MNE	+21 years
8.	E8	Male	30-40	Doctorate	Siirt	CHE	11-15 years
9.	E9	Male	20-30	Master's	Rize	CHE	5-10 years
10.	K1	Female	40-50	Bachelor's	İstanbul	MNE	+21 years
11.	K2	Female	30-40	Bachelor's	İstanbul	MNE	11-15 years
12.	K3	Female	40-50	Doctorate	Kocaeli	MNE	16-20 years
13.	K4	Female	40-50	Bachelor's	İzmir	MNE	+21 years
14.	K5	Female	40-50	Bachelor's	Aydın	MNE	+21 years
15.	K6	Female	20-30	Master's	Ankara	CHE	5-10 years
16.	K7	Female	30-40	Bachelor's	Sakarya	MNE	16-20 years
17.	K8	Female	30-40	Doctorate	Van	CHE	11-15 years
18.	K9	Female	20-30	Master's	Adana	CHE	5-10 years

MNE: Ministry of National Education; CHE: Council of Higher Education.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

This study was conducted in the fall semester of the 2023–2024 academic year between 28 December and 15 March 2023. Before conducting the study, approval was obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Committee of the institution where researchers were working (Protocol Number: E-14679147-663.05-625607). Data for the study were collected through interviews using a semi-structured interview form previously developed by the researchers. In order to formulate the questions in the semi-structured interview form, research articles on juvenile delinquency [10,18–22,40,43,54] and social studies curriculum were reviewed. After completing the literature review for the preparation of the research questions, as stated by Bogdan and Biklen [55] and Patton [56], care was taken to ensure that the questions were easy to understand, subject-oriented, open-ended, free from guidance and in a logical order. The interview questions developed in this context were first submitted to the opinion of a faculty member who is an expert in the field of social services. Then, the same interview questions were presented to two different lecturers who are experts in the field of classroom teaching and the teaching of social studies to get their opinions. Although the research focused on the opinions of social science educators, the opinions of the expert in the field of classroom teaching were consulted if his field of study was social studies education.

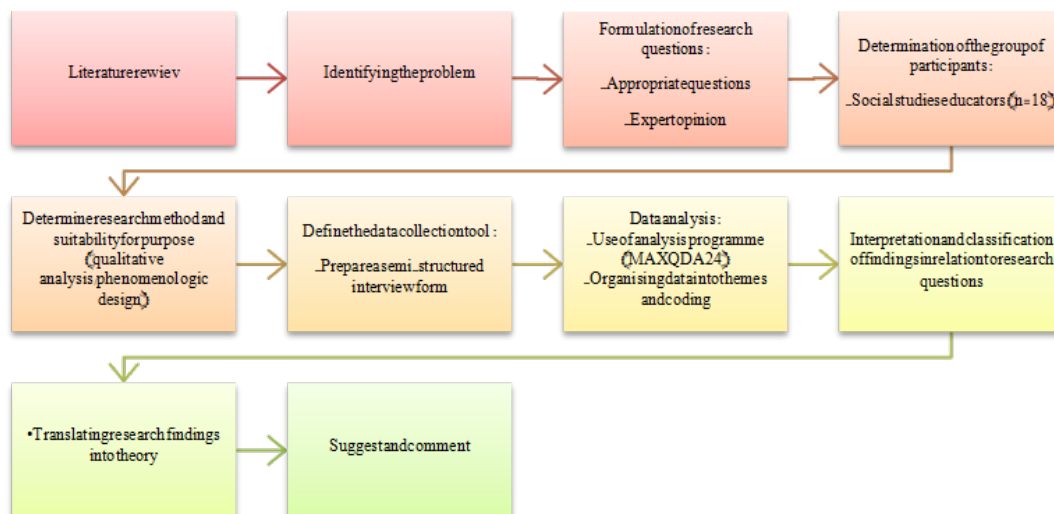
The interview form was finalised in line with the expert opinions on the interview form questions. In the next step, a pre-application was carried out to measure the applicability of the interview form questions. The pre-application was carried out by conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants in Muş, Siirt, Van and Diyarbakır provinces from Türkiye, which were closest to the researchers. The preliminary interview lasted about 57 minutes. In addition, the opinions and experiences of some social studies educators who were interviewed outside the pretest were used. MAXQDA 2024 was used to measure the agreement between the data and it was found that the agreement between the data was at the 95% level. The prominent codes with the agreement index were shown to the participants and their opinions were sought on the appropriateness of their proposed ratings. In the first part of the semi-structured interview form there are questions describing the demographic characteristics of the participants (gender, age, level of education, institution and years of service). In the second part of the interview form, there are questions aimed at determining the teachers' opinions about the reasons that lead children to commit crimes, what can be done to prevent juvenile delinquency, and the adequacy of the social studies curriculum in preventing juvenile delinquency. Accordingly, the semi-structured interview questions addressed to the participants in the study are listed below:

- What do you think about juvenile delinquency?
- Which of the individual, environmental and family factors are more effective in getting juvenile delinquency?
- What is the impact of the social environment and economic structure on the involvement of juvenile delinquency?

- What do you think about legal regulations among the measures to be taken against the reasons that lead juvenile delinquency?
- What do you think about the measures that families can take in relation to the reasons that lead juvenile delinquency?
- What do you think about the protective measures taken to prevent children from becoming juvenile delinquency? What do you think about the adequacy of these measures?
- What is your opinion about the measures and regulations that the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of the Interior can take against the reasons that push juvenile delinquency?
- Does the social studies curriculum include preventive knowledge, skills and acquisition related to juvenile delinquency? What can be done?

The interviews were first conducted by telephone and then by e-mail with the consent of the participants, as it was easy to reach the participants, and the interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to express their views in detail and provide rich, descriptive data. In fact, Creswell and Miller [51] emphasises that interviews conducted by telephone and e-mail with the consent of the participants can be an important convenience for researchers in data collection. James and Busher [57] and Gibson [58] state that chat rooms, e-mail, teleconferencing and instant messaging are used as data collection tools in qualitative research. In this way, it provides significant advantages in terms of time and cost efficiency as it reduces the cost of data collection, transcription and transportation. In addition, it offers convenience to participants by allowing them to respond to the requested information in a comfortable environment by offering flexibility of time and place [59]. In accordance with the consent obtained from the participants during the telephone interviews, the interview form was sent by email during the academic years 2023–2024.

Participants were informed of the nature of the study, that they would have three weeks to respond to the first email, that each participant would be given a code, that the opinions would be analysed for scientific purposes only, and that the findings would be shared with them if they so wished. Given the busy schedules of the participants, the data collection process was completed in a total of 6 weeks, including the delay in responses (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1.** Research Procedure.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

As the data in this research will go through qualitative analysis processes, the phenomenon was first defined and a semi-structured interview form was created for data collection. Data collection procedures were then carried out and this process was followed by data analysis, interpretation and reporting [60]. Data were collected via email messages sent by the researchers to the participants and analysed by both researchers in a collaborative process. In order to ensure the internal validity of the study, preliminary interviews were conducted with different teachers who were not involved in the study (data source triangulation), and care was taken to ensure that participants par-

anticipated in the study under equal conditions during the data collection process. Encouraging language (style) was used in the text of the email messages to ensure that participants could express their views clearly and comfortably. In this context, care was taken not to manipulate the participants' views in the text of the e-mail message and in the data collection form.

Since the content analysis technique is often used in scientific studies to obtain themes and concepts that can explain qualitative data [58], the data in this study were analysed according to the content analysis technique. Accordingly, the data were interpreted by dividing them into codes, categories and themes according to the content analysis technique, using the MAXQDA 24 programmer. In case of differences between the codings, the researcher authors met and came to a common decision. In order to classify the research data and present direct quotations, participants were given sequential code numbers (E1...K1...) [53]. In addition, the code cloud and code map obtained from the data were used in the study to provide the reader with a holistic perspective. It is important that the findings obtained are aligned with the purpose of the research and are consistent in order to ensure the reliability of the research [61]. In this regard, the findings were presented to two participants (E1, K1) to evaluate the findings and eliminate the sections with the possibility of misunderstanding, and positive feedback was received. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure the transferability of the study and the participants were selected based on their previous experience or knowledge of the topic under study. In addition, the raw data were transformed according to the themes and transferred without adding the researcher's interpretation and remaining true to the nature of the data.

### 3. Findings

In this section, the code map showing the findings of the research and the data related to direct quotations are organised.

#### 3.1. Keywords on Which the Participants' Views Are Concentrated

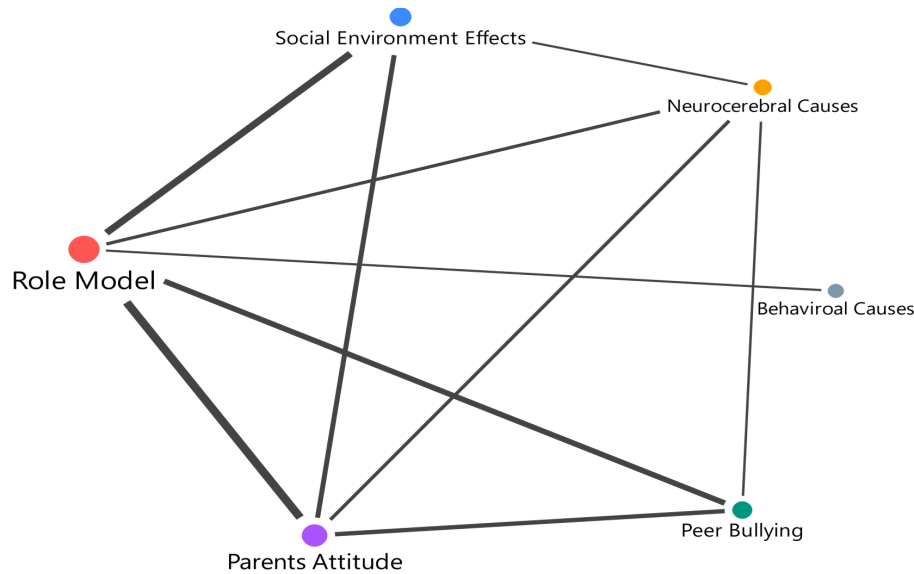
According to the data obtained from the interviews, it can be seen that the codes of role model, peer bullying, family, moral development, parental attitude, awareness of law and justice and economy are more prominent than other codes (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Word Cloud Showing the Prominent Codes in the Data Obtained from the Interviews.

### 3.2. Findings in Relation to Educators' Views on Juvenile Delinquency and Reasons for Getting Juvenile Delinquency

The factors influencing young people's tendency towards criminal behavior are shaped not only by individual inclinations but also by multidimensional social dynamics, such as family, the social environment, peer groups, and role models. The perceptions of social studies teachers on this issue provide an important source of data on the educational and social aspects of this multidimensional structure. The findings related to the research question "What are the opinions of social studies teachers on the reasons that lead to juvenile delinquency? (**Figure 3**)".



**Figure 3.** Code Map of Factors Influencing Juvenile Delinquency.

According to the code map above, 'role models' (N: 15) and 'parents' attitude' (N: 13) are the most important factors in juvenile delinquency. In this regard, E3 stated that children generally look to family elders and adults around them as role models, and if the role models have been involved in crime before, they take negative role models from these people (**Figure 3**). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant E3 is as follows;

"... children first find themselves in the family environment, which is the environment where they are born, and take their basic character from the family environment. However, even though they show a reasonable character and behavioral characteristics in the family environment, the positive/negative characters that the individual encounters in his/her environment and social life are the factors that will shape his/her personal life and accordingly have an impact on whether he/she will be dragged into crime or not..."

Participant K3 stated that the attitudes of the families also had an effect on the children's involvement in crime, explaining that the children's lack of love and indifference led them to become involved in crime. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant P3 is as follows;

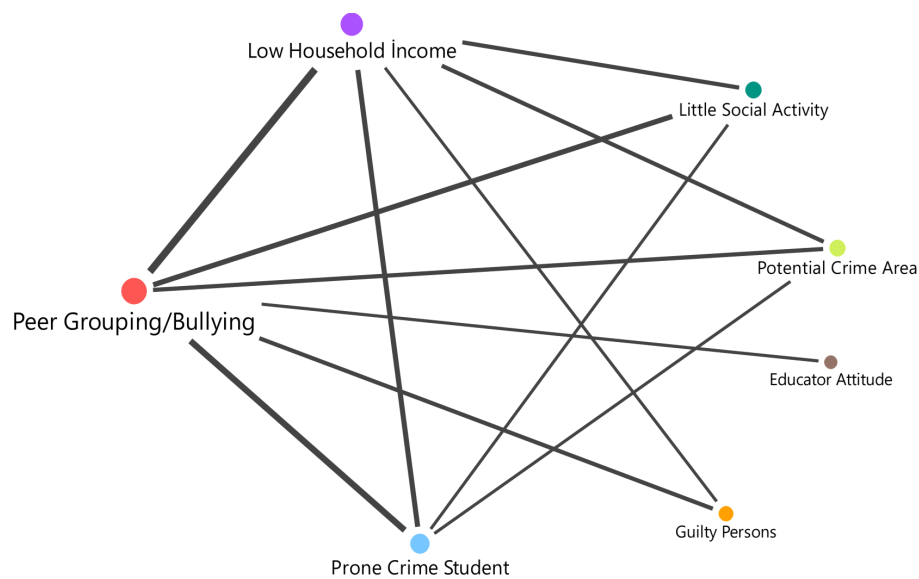
"...I think that the environmental factor affects the wrong attitudes of families (negligent or oppressive). In other words, children who cannot receive the necessary attention, love and care in the family environment, who have not received moral and value education or who have experienced traumatic situations (violence, abuse) are thrown away by the effect of the emptiness inside them. They come under the influence of the situations they will encounter from now on (environmental factor). From this point on, the people, environment, etc. they will encounter can turn for better or worse in line with the situations. In other words, they start with their family situation and continue on their way with the wind of fortune

(good or bad) ...”

The findings suggest that the factors of ‘role model’ and ‘parental attitude’ significantly influence children’s propensity for crime. Teachers’ statements reveal that this process begins in the family environment and is reinforced by the social environment and peer influences. This confirms that structural and relational dynamics, as well as individual factors, play a role in children’s drift towards criminal behavior. Consequently, strategies for crime prevention must include policies that transform children’s social environments, as well as support mechanisms for families.

### 3.3. The Findings Related to the Research Question “What Are the Opinions of Social Studies Teachers about the Effects of Social Environment and Economic Structure on Juvenile Delinquency?”

The processes through which children turn to crime are shaped not only by individual factors but also by the decisive influence of their social environment and economic conditions. Peer relationships, the school environment and the economic circumstances of families can encourage social adaptation in children, but they can also make children more susceptible to criminal behavior (**Figure 4**).



**Figure 4.** Code Map Relating to The Impact of The Social Environment and The Economic Structure on The Delinquent Behaviour of Children.

According to the code map above, ‘peer bullying’ (N: 14) and ‘low household income’ (N: 12) are the leading social environment and economic structure factors on juvenile delinquency. In this context, K9 emphasised that children who are exposed to peer bullying are introverted, and in this case, they can be drawn into crime (**Figure 4**). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant K9 is as follows;

“... peer bullying, grouping up to gangs, the location of the school, the socio-economic conditions covered by this location are very effective on the criminal element. So much so that students who are exposed to peer bullying experience a serious psychological loneliness and in my opinion this loneliness pushes them to crime...”

Participant E6 emphasised that in families with low household income, depending on the economic situation, children may be drawn into crime to overcome this situation and stated that families should not see children as a source of income and profit. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant E6 is as follows;

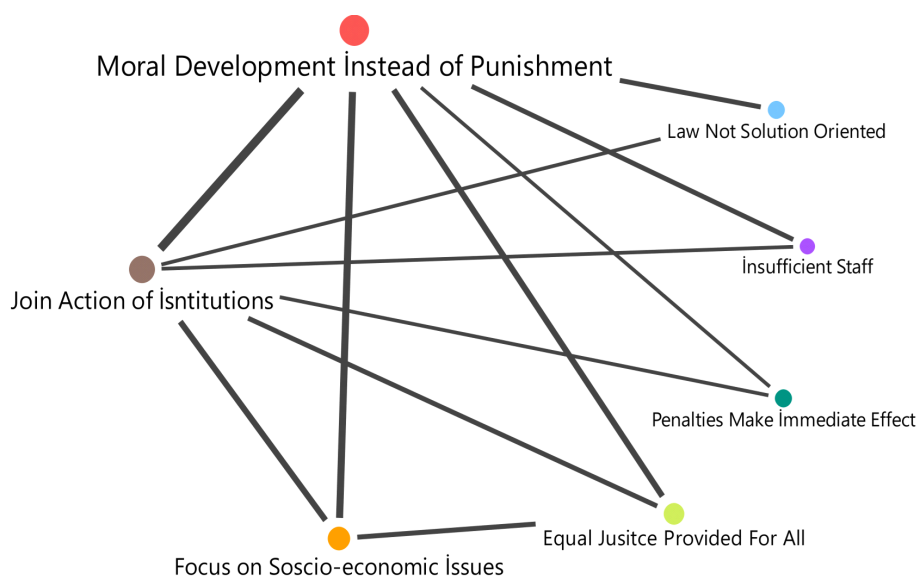
“... unrest in the family, which is the most important group and institution in our social structure, based on

financial reasons, financial difficulties and fights between parents cause the individual to become isolated, and with this, the family employs the child and often enters into illegal formations that they see as a basis for themselves and get involved in crime...”

Findings show that peer bullying and low household income have a significant impact on juvenile delinquency. Teachers’ views reveal that exclusion and economic deprivation are powerful dynamics that can lead children to crime. This situation demonstrates that prevention policies require comprehensive interventions aimed not only at the individual level but also at transforming social and economic structures.

### 3.4. The Findings Related to the Research Question “What Are the Opinions of Social Studies Teachers about the Effects of Legal Regulations on Juvenile Delinquency?”

Although legal regulations are an important tool for preventing juvenile delinquency, it is clear that punitive measures alone are insufficient. Educational approaches that support children’s moral development and cooperation between institutions are crucial (**Figure 5**).



**Figure 5.** Code Map on The Impact of Legislation on Child Delinquency.

It can be seen that ‘moral development rather than punishment’ (N: 15) and ‘institutions should act together’ (N: 14) stand out among teachers’ opinions on the impact of legislation on juvenile delinquency according to the code map above. On this issue, E4 emphasised that the legislation on juvenile delinquency should focus on the moral development of children rather than on punishment, and stated that this would be achieved through education (**Figure 5**). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant E4 is as follows;

“... of course, legal regulations are a deterrent for crimes. However, I think that a moral dimension should be added if it is taken beyond the crime and punishment period according to the moral development period of individuals. This can be achieved through education. If moral and effective individuals are raised through family-school-student interaction, it will be the biggest measure for crime. For example, raising individuals who do not adopt jaywalking not only to avoid being fined but also because it is a social rule of law...”

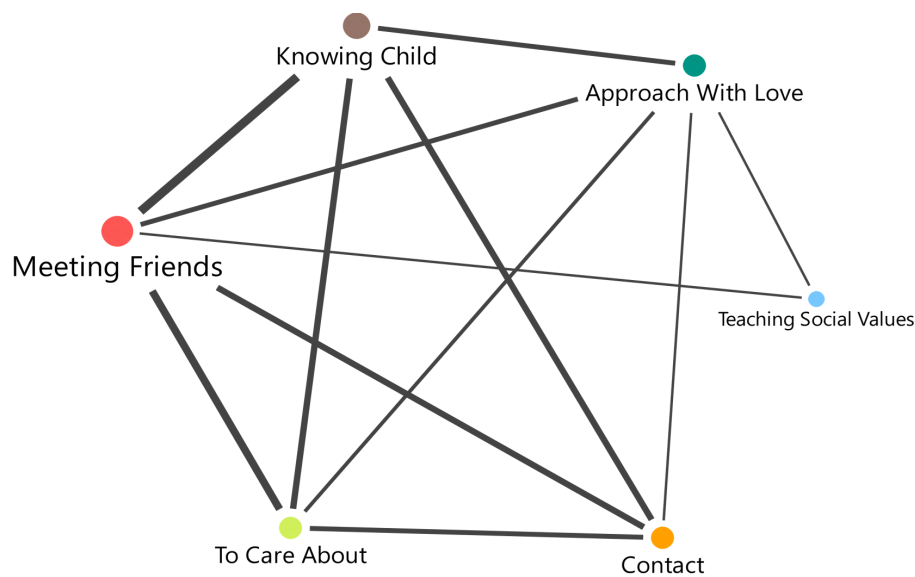
Participant E2 stated that legal regulations alone are not sufficient to eliminate juvenile delinquency, but that public/private institutions should act together. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant E2 is as follows;

“...in my opinion, even the most perfect law cannot prevent people from crime. Here, family, school, etc. social institutions should come together and act in co-operation...”

The findings reveal that the vast majority of teachers prioritize legal regulations that emphasize moral development over punishment, and that this can only be achieved through education. Furthermore, it is stated that the law alone is insufficient to prevent crime and that the family, school and other social institutions must work together. These results suggest that legal policies aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency should focus on moral development, education, and inter-institutional coordination rather than solely on criminal regulations.

### 3.5. Findings Related to Teachers' Opinions on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency

The findings related to the question “What precautions should the family take against the reasons why children become involved in crime” in the research questions are presented below. Juvenile delinquency can be prevented through family support, effective protection mechanisms and inter-agency cooperation. In this context, teachers' views reveal the priorities that should be considered when preventing juvenile delinquency from a multidimensional perspective (**Figure 6**).



**Figure 6.** Code Map of Measures to Be Taken by The Family to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency.

According to the code map above, it can be seen that values such as ‘showing interest’ (N: 16), ‘getting to know the child well’ (N: 14) and ‘getting to know his/her friends well’ (N: 11) stand out among the teachers' opinions on what measures the family should take to prevent juvenile delinquency. In this regard, E7 emphasised that the family's close attention to the child would prevent him/her from being drawn into crime and stated that the family should provide a balanced control in this regard (**Figure 6**). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant E7 is as follows;

“...no matter what, the child should receive love in the family, feel that he/she is valuable and be accepted as an individual. In addition, families should keep their children under supervision without making them feel it, they should give the child the image that my family is watching what I do, even if it is a little bit, so that children's criminal behaviour can be prevented. Again, families should learn from their children what their children do when they spend time at school or outside, but this should not be in an interrogative manner...”

Participant E1 emphasised that families should know their children well and stated that parents should act as friends with their children when necessary. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from participant

E1's interview transcript is as follows;

"... parents should first get to know their children well. Children generally do not share the problems that may lead to crime with their families because they think that their families will get angry or punish them. Whatever the child does, he/she should be able to tell his/her family about it. Families should never set clear boundaries when raising children. Families should know their children's friends and families well..."

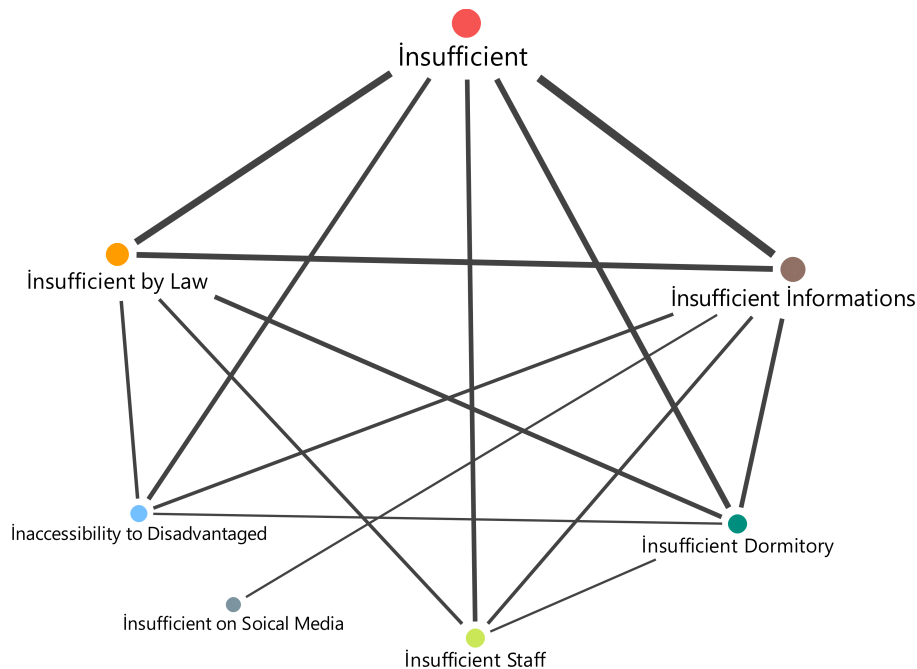
Participant P6 emphasised that parents should get to know their children's friends and friends' circle well and stated that parents should meet with their children's friends when necessary. Accordingly, an example of participant P6's statement, taken directly from the interview transcript, is as follows;

"... I think that parents should be careful about their children's social environment and friends and get to know their children's friends..."

Overall, these views demonstrate that teachers consider family involvement, effective communication and knowledge of children's friends to be crucial in preventing crime. They emphasise the importance of making children feel loved and valued while also ensuring they know their families are aware of their behaviour. Maintaining this balance of care and control is considered crucial for guiding children in a positive direction.

### 3.6. Findings Related to Teachers' Opinions on Protective Measures Taken to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency

The findings related to the research question "What are the opinions of teachers about the protective measures taken to prevent juvenile delinquency?" are given below (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Code Map of Protective Measures to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency.

According to the code map above, it can be seen that under the main theme of 'insufficient' (N: 16), 'awareness-raising activities' (N: 12), 'personnel' and 'legal' evaluations stand out among the teachers' opinions about the protective measures taken to prevent children from becoming involved in crime. On this topic, E5 stated that the awareness-raising activities to be organised for the implementation of protective measures were insufficient (Figure 7). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant E5 is as follows;

“... education and awareness raising programmers about the consequences of being dragged into crime in schools and society are very important. However, I think that the effectiveness, content and prevalence of these programmers are not sufficient in terms of activity organisation...”

Participant E9 stated that as a result of the qualitative and quantitative inadequacy of the staff in the dormitories where children in need of protection or care are placed, the children move away from the dormitories. Accordingly, the example of participant E9’s statement, taken directly from the interview transcript, is as follows;

“... the rehabilitation of the child delivered to the dormitory also determines the quality of the protection here. I have heard that there is a lack of personnel with sufficient knowledge and skills in this regard in some dormitories. As a matter of fact, in a dormitory with insufficient personnel and lack of qualifications, a child who is not well educated and rehabilitated can escape from the dormitory when necessary...”

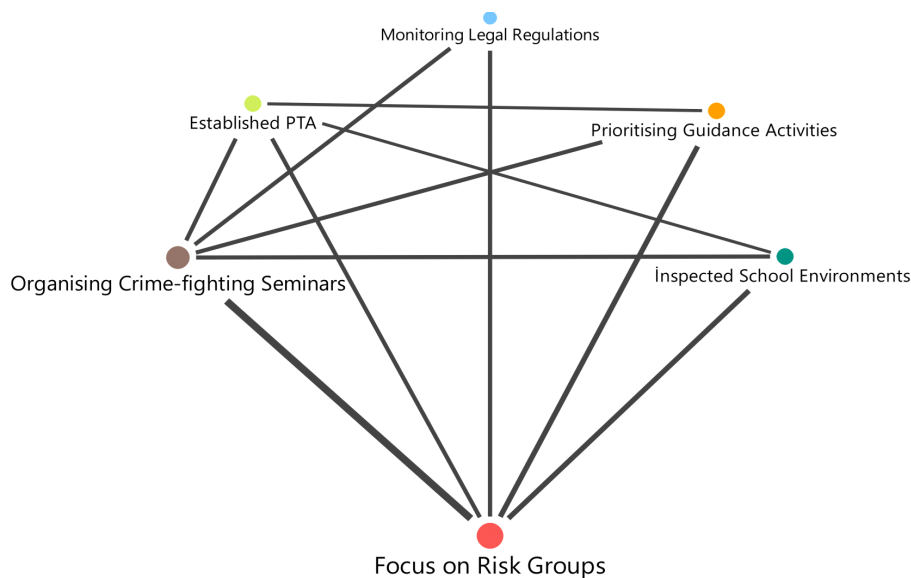
Participant K4 emphasised the inadequacy of legal regulations in the field of protection measures, stating that the state mechanism should not release children in need of care to the streets immediately after their 18th birthday. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant K4 is as follows;

“...The fact that children in need of protection, which can only constitute an example in this regard, are forced to leave the houses and dormitories where they are sheltered without permanent accommodation and employment as required by laws and regulations when they turn 18, increases the possibility of getting involved in crime after a while. This is an indication that there are inadequacies in laws and regulations...”

In general, teachers believe that protective measures are insufficient. Awareness activities are limited, there is insufficient staff in dormitories, and the laws do not provide long-term support for children after they turn 18. These issues reduce the effectiveness of protection measures and may increase the risk of children becoming involved in criminal activity.

### 3.7. Findings Related to Teachers’ Opinions on Measures That the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of the Interior Can Take to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency

The results related to the question “What are the teachers’ opinions about the measures that the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of the Interior can take to prevent juvenile delinquency? (Figure 8)”.



**Figure 8.** Code Map of Measures That Can Be Taken by The Ministry of National Education and The Ministry of The Interior to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency.

According to the above-mentioned code map, among the teachers' opinions on the measures that can be taken by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of the Interior to prevent juvenile delinquency, evaluations such as "giving importance to risk groups" (N: 15), "organising seminars on combating crime" (N: 13) and "prioritising guidance activities" (N: 10) stand out. In this regard, K3 emphasised that the relevant institutions should identify risk groups by organising joint studies and that they should prioritise their activities for people who have the potential to be drawn into crime (**Figure 8**). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant K3 is as follows;

"...children who are likely to be dragged into crime are identified in this way. I don't know whether this situation is shared with the Ministry of Internal Affairs or not. I think it is probably shared with the juvenile branch. Detection is good at this point, applause. Well, is there any activity for these children? I have not seen this. We have always identified them so far, but I have not seen any activity for children in the risk group. This is a big deficiency. These data should be shared with relevant institutions and action should be taken. Both families should be examined and counselling and education services should be provided for these children..."

Participant K7 stated that the relevant institutions should organise seminars on the prevention of juvenile delinquency, both for the staff of the institutions and for the risk groups. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant K7 is as follows;

"... both the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Interior can organise applications such as KADES and family training seminars for their own personnel and children with the potential to be dragged into crime in order to prevent violence in families..."

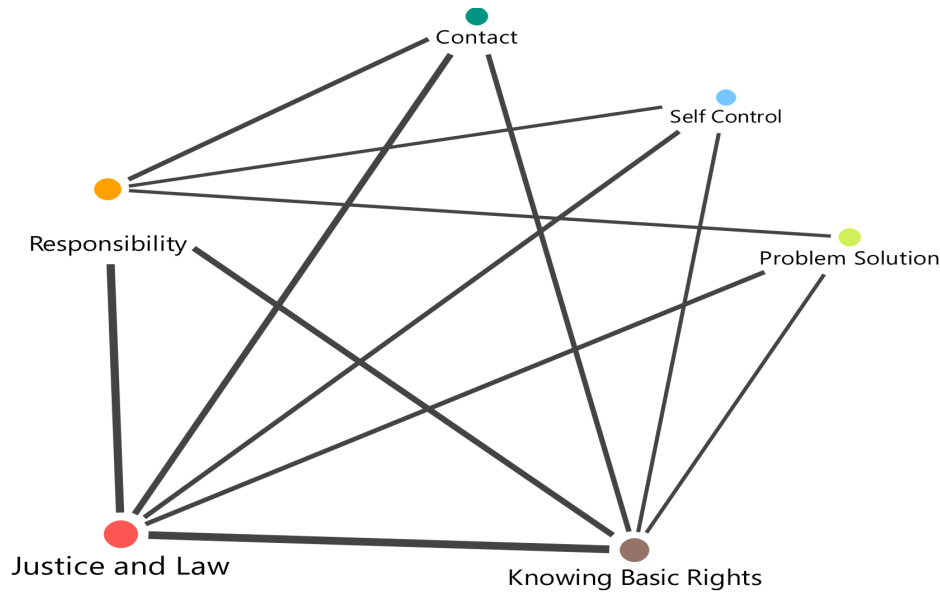
Participant E5 emphasised that the Ministry of National Education has not taken sufficient measures to prevent juvenile delinquency and stated that guidance activities organised by risk groups in cooperation with the General Directorate of Security should be emphasised. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant K5 is as follows;

"... I have not heard that any ministry has implemented an effective work and practice at the national level regarding children dragged into crime. I have only heard that there is a handbook called Counselling measure practices published by the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services and that it contains important information for CSWs. I also know that the Ministry of Interior has seminars on the fight against drugs in schools through the EGM. In addition, if you ask me, I believe that the key point in the solution of this problem is a proper and systematic social studies education to be given in basic education..."

The findings show that family involvement and guidance are fundamental preventive factors. However, the inadequacy of existing protective measures and legal loopholes increases the risk. Teachers emphasize the need for the Ministries of National Education and the Interior to strengthen guidance and joint efforts for at-risk groups. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive, multi-level policies to prevent juvenile delinquency.

### **3.8. Findings Related to Teachers' Evaluation of the Social Studies Curriculum in Terms of Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency**

The social studies curriculum is a fundamental part of the education system, aiming to raise students to become conscious citizens by teaching them about social values, rights and responsibilities. Therefore, the program's content plays a critical role in deterring children from crime and helping them to adapt to life in a democratic society. The findings related to the research question "What are the teachers' opinions about the social studies curriculum in terms of preventing juvenile delinquency? (**Figure 9**)".



**Figure 9.** Evaluation Code Map on Knowledge, Skills and Gains Related to Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency.

The code map above shows that ‘law and justice’ (N: 14), ‘being responsible’ (N: 13), ‘knowing basic rights’ (N: 11) and feature prominently in teachers’ opinions about the knowledge, skills and outcomes in the social studies curriculum related to the prevention of juvenile delinquency. In this regard, E4 emphasised that the social studies curriculum should include the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to the values of law and justice, and stated that the Law and Justice elective could be a guide in this regard (**Figure 9**). Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from Participant E4’s interview transcript is as follows;

“... I don’t see that there are too many achievements in this regard. Although there are achievements related to the use of rights in the face of problems or effective citizenship, I think that the achievements in the elective “Law and Justice” course should be placed in the content of this course. As a teacher who teaches this course, considering that this course is not selected in all schools, I think that especially the rights should be emphasised at this point and the achievements explaining the importance of solving problems on the basis of rights and freedoms should be increased...”

Participant P4 stated that as long as the social studies education programmer provides students with sufficient knowledge and skills to know their fundamental rights, juvenile delinquency will continue to decrease. Accordingly, the example of a statement taken directly from the interview transcript of participant K4 is as follows;

“... the basic thinking skills of the social studies curriculum include skills that develop children’s thinking abilities identified as critical, constructive and creative thinking and problem-solving skills, improve children’s interpersonal relationships, and enable them to grow up as self-confident individuals with an understanding of cooperation and responsibility. If these can be fully acquired, children’s offence directors will be reduced to that extent...”

Participant E6 stated that as long as the social studies education programmer provides students with sufficient knowledge and skills to be aware of their responsibilities, juvenile delinquency will decrease and they will be in harmony with society. Accordingly, the example of participant E6’s statement, taken directly from the interview transcript, is as follows;

“... one of the main objectives of the social studies course is to raise good citizens who are aware of their responsibilities. The negative factors that cause children, who are the future of tomorrow, to be dragged into crime should be included in the curriculum at every grade level. It is necessary to reveal the impor-

tance of the family and the positive characteristics of the extended family in society in order to gain the knowledge and skills that they have responsibilities towards the society they live in..."

A purposive sampling method was used to ensure the transferability of the study and the participants were selected based on their previous experience or knowledge of the topic under study. In addition, the raw data were transformed according to the themes and transferred without adding the researcher's interpretation and remaining true to the nature of the data.

Findings reveal that teachers consider the learning outcomes of 'law and justice,' 'knowledge of fundamental rights,' and 'responsibility' to be particularly important in preventing juvenile delinquency. Teachers emphasize that the curriculum should not only focus on knowledge transfer but also support critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. These results demonstrate that the social studies program is a strategic tool for fostering a right- and freedom-based understanding of citizenship among children and mitigating the risk of delinquency.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

As part of the research, the participants were first asked whether they understood the concept of 'juvenile delinquency' in detail. This is because it is considered important for the participants to have a correct perception of the concept of juvenile delinquency in order to influence the questions to be asked in the next stage and to avoid confusion of concepts. From the answers given by the group of participants to the questions, it was understood that their level of knowledge about the concept of juvenile delinquency was sufficient, which coincided with the results of the analysis. In this study, the researchers came to the conclusion that social studies teachers have the right knowledge about the concept of juvenile delinquency and that they can make opinions and evaluations about juvenile delinquency in terms of the causes and measures of juvenile delinquency and the social studies education programme, and this situation contributed to the depth of the research. Furthermore, the fact that social studies educators are in an educational position within the scope of citizenship education and values education [43,47] shows that they have the ability to express opinions about juvenile delinquency and its causes.

According to the results of the research, the participants stated that role modelling and parental attitudes among family factors have an important effect among the reasons that push children into crime. Agnew and Brezina [8] stated that children's aggression and subsequent involvement in crime is influenced by the fact that the people they look up to in their environment are role models in terms of behaviour and discourse. Çabuk [54], who assessed this situation in terms of the family, emphasised that mothers and fathers are important role models for children to show aggressive behaviour and stated that children may be at risk of being drawn into crime in the social environment. Accordingly, it is believed that in order to eliminate the negative role model situation on children, especially family members (mother, father, siblings, etc.) should show sensitivity in all kinds of discourses and behaviours in the environment where children are present.

According to the results of the research, reasons such as bullying by peers to which the child is exposed in society and the low household income of the family to which the child belongs socially are among the social environment and economic factors that cause children to become involved in crime. De Araujo et al. [26] highlighted that the risk of being involved in crime later in life is higher for children who are working on the street due to the economic insufficiency of the family than for those who are attending school, and found that peer bullying is at a high level among children who are working on the street. Bulgurcuoğlu and Çamur Duyan [32] also highlighted that as the economic situation of families improves, juvenile delinquency decreases, especially in matters such as theft and property damage, and stated that those who have a history of crime in their peer environment in particular are easily dragged into crime. Furthermore, Hoffmann et al. [33] found that low levels of social education are an important social factor that accelerates the process of children being drawn into crime. According to these evaluations, it is assumed that ensuring school attendance for children with low family income and directing children exposed to peer bullying to counselling activities will be beneficial in preventing them from being involved in crime in the future.

The idea has emerged that the legal regulations to be enacted for the prevention of juvenile delinquency should be aimed at ensuring moral development rather than punishment, and that public institutions should carry out joint studies within the framework of legal regulations. Çakır [62], who stated that legal regulations should basically be in a structure that prevents the occurrence of crime, stated that laws should have the potential to guide people at the

point of moral development. Öngören & Katılmış [10], who stated that juvenile delinquency cannot be prevented by sharp legal regulations, stated that training and seminar activities on values and morals to be jointly organised by the Ministries of Interior and National Education will be beneficial in this regard. It is stated that the family should pay attention to their child, get to know him/her well and get to know his/her friends well in order to prevent the child from getting involved in crime. Öngören et al. [63] stated that it is common for people who do not receive attention in the family environment and whose personality traits are like a secret to seek such attention outside the family environment, and Çabuk [54] stated that children of families who do not show close attention to their children remain away from the feeling of love and affection, and in this case, they can be dragged into crime. Okatan and Tagay [64] emphasised that showing interest in the child is not only to support them financially, and stated that parents should meet their child's close friends, when necessary, in which case the risk of the child turning to crime is reduced. Accordingly, it is believed that if children receive close attention from family members and are recognised by family members in terms of personality traits, this will create a sense of being part of the family and will be beneficial in terms of developing a sense of belonging and preventing them from being drawn into crime.

Concerning the protective measures that should be implemented for children involved in crime, the participants stated that the existing measures are insufficient, that it is essential to make new legal arrangements, that the personnel carrying out activities related to children involved in crime in public institutions (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Ministry of National Education, etc.) should have sufficient knowledge and skills in this regard, and that it is necessary to ensure a sufficient number of personnel in public institutions [49]. Kitapçioğlu Yüksel [65] pointed out that there should be legal provisions enabling children to benefit from sports and cultural activities, and noted that there is no such provision in the Child Protection Law 5395. Sternberg [66] emphasised that it is important to know what stages children involved in crime go through in the judicial process and stated that judicial practices related to children should be reviewed with legal regulations and that executive personnel (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers) should receive specialised training on juvenile delinquency issues in order to implement them in accordance with their objectives. Accordingly, it is considered that the legal regulations and protective measures to be taken in relation to children involved in crime should be reviewed and that cultural activities should also be included, and that it would be beneficial for public personnel involved in juvenile delinquency to receive specialised training in order to provide an effective service.

According to the findings, the opinion was expressed that the Ministry of Interior should prioritise risk groups and organise anti-crime seminars in order to prevent juvenile delinquency, while the opinion was expressed that the Ministry of National Education should prioritise necessary guidance activities in this regard. Harrikari [67] pointed out that the control of juvenile delinquency is a common problem area for both education and security officials, and stated that students identified as risk groups should be directed to preventive activities by organising joint studies of different disciplines. Şentuna [34] also stated that the issue of juvenile delinquency is given importance in Western countries and that children are included in the scope of risk-oriented crime prevention programmes in order to intervene early in the period when they show a tendency towards antisocial behaviour, before they are drawn into crime. Accordingly, it is considered that the implementation of crime prevention programmes depends on the Ministry of Education's focus on guidance activities and that early intervention will be useful in preventing juvenile delinquency. The main objective of curricula is to guide students towards desired behaviours and, in this context, to provide basic knowledge and skills for individuals to live in harmony with society. In this way, the desired profile of an acceptable citizen is created and the individual is ensured to avoid negative behaviours that disrupt the peace and order of society [43,62,68,69]. According to social studies educators, the social studies curriculum includes knowledge, skills and outcomes such as awareness of law and justice, awareness of basic rights and responsibilities of citizenship in relation to the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

#### 4.1. Research Findings (Summary)

- Teachers can correctly define the concept of juvenile delinquency.
- Having negative role models within the family can lead children to commit crimes.
- Low socioeconomic status and peer influence are identified as risk factors.
- Current legal regulations and personnel capacity are insufficient.
- The emphasis is on moral development and values education rather than punishment.
- Cooperation between institutions and guidance services should be strengthened.

- Social studies classes can contribute to crime prevention by educating students about the law, rights and responsibilities.

## 4.2. Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that family-related factors, such as negative role modelling, lack of parental attention, and problematic parenting practices, are central to juvenile delinquency. Therefore, it is recommended that family-oriented training and awareness programmes be developed to strengthen parents' sensitivity and parenting skills. Supporting families to recognise children's needs may reduce the risk of delinquent behaviour.

Peer bullying and low socio-economic status were also identified as significant risk factors. Schools should provide effective guidance and counselling services to children at risk. Directing students exposed to bullying or economic disadvantage to psychosocial support and preventive programmes may help prevent future delinquency.

The study also highlighted inadequacies in the current legal framework and protective measures. Legal regulations should focus on preventive and rehabilitative objectives rather than solely punitive measures. Public personnel—including teachers, social workers, police officers, judges, and prosecutors—should receive specialised in-service training to effectively work with children involved in or at risk of delinquency.

Participants emphasised the importance of cultural, artistic, and sports activities as protective factors. Making these opportunities accessible to at-risk children may support their healthy development and reduce antisocial behaviour.

Finally, juvenile delinquency is a multidimensional issue requiring inter-institutional collaboration. Ministries, universities, and other stakeholders should work together through joint projects, seminars, and preventive programmes. Future research should include educators from other disciplines to provide a more comprehensive understanding of preventive strategies.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, H.Ö. and F.Y.; methodology, H.Ö.; software, H.Ö.; validation, F.Y. and H.Ö.; formal analysis, H.Ö.; investigation, H.Ö.; resources, F.Y.; data curation, H.Ö.; writing—original draft preparation, F.Y.; writing—review and editing, H.Ö.; visualization, H.Ö.; supervision, F.Y.; project administration, F.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Funding

The authors declare that they have received no financial support for the planning, data provision or publication of this article. The research was conducted independently without any external funding or sponsorship.

## Institutional Review Board Statement

The ethics committee approval for this study/research was obtained from Dicle University (Protocol Number: E-14679147-663.05-625607).

## Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

## Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Acknowledgments

The authors sincerely thank the participants for their cooperation and the reviewers for their constructive feedback, which has greatly improved the quality of this paper.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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