

Youth Gangs and Urban Security: Case Studies from Madrid and Mexico City

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Sánchez Muñoz, Carmen. Youth Gangs and Urban Security: Case Studies from Madrid and Mexico City. *Revista Electrónica de Ciencia Penal y Criminología*. 2025, núm. 27-03, pp. 1-21.

Abstract: This research includes the complicated encounter between urban security and youth gangs by comparing the case studies in Madrid, Spain, and Mexico City. With the development, urban centers being faced problems with acts of violence, fragmentation of society, and inequality. The rising tide of youth gangs has increasingly seemed to become the cause of the violence of security, which in turn increasingly drawn towards the insecurity problems. Through the study, with the briefing of the similarities and differences in their formation, organization, and effect on the safety of the masses, it is investigated that how socio-economic, cultural, and political variables give birth to the spread of youth gangs in these two metropolitan areas. Youth gangs in Madrid are commonly associated with a subordinate immigrant group, where low opportunities for education, jobs, and social inclusion lead to a feeling of exclusion and sometimes identity crises among young people. Gangs including Latin Kings and Netas, which are also known as Latin gangs, have gained popularity in some of the territories, resulting in an occasional bout of violence and an increased level of concern among the public. These groups, though having elements of crime in them, occasionally provide a

sense of belonging and social order in perceived neglectful or hostile environment. Although the problem with the growing issues of social inequality and marginalization in both cities is similar, their historical, cultural, and political dynamics demand the following strategies. The paper supports the multi-sectoral approach, which is based on a balance between enforcement and prevention, as well as education, and empowerment of the community. There is need that Urban security would be effective in not only dealing with the symptoms of gang violence but, more importantly it should also be effective to deal with the conditions that feed the problem. Finally, the research study helps to develop the complement of knowledge about the issue of urban security governance in cities and urges the implementation of inclusive, youth-focused policies, which could transform the culture of violence into productive involvement in city life. The cases of Madrid and Mexico City become the most important examples, serving as a model for other cities with the identical drawback of controlling the young violence and city security.

Keywords: Youth Gangs (YG), Urban Security (US), Case Studies (CS), Madrid (MM), Mexico City (MC).

Received Date: 06 January 2025

Date of Publication in RECPC: 01 August 2025

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I. Introduction

Youth Gangs refer to a group of young people who mostly engage in violent activities and share common Identities. This aspect has become a main concern in different areas, especially in urban areas. In recent years, it has been seen that there is hype about youth Gangs in urban areas because of various important factors. If we discuss those factors that contribute to the involvement of youth in gangs, we may come to know that there are most prominent social and economic factors. For Example, when there is poverty in any country, there will be a rise in youth Gangs involvement. In this way, we can say that poverty is the main leading factor for youth Gangs development in urban areas. In most developing countries, it has been seen that there is a lack of opportunities, and such a lack will lead to involvement in violent activities. Most of the people who get involved in such activities are young. We can say that social exclusion is also an important factor that contributes to youth gang formation because, in most cases, young people feel that they are not part of society or they are not given equal importance. It will trigger anger in young people, and they will get involved in violent activities. Family dynamics can also be considered a prominent factor for youth gang formation, but a dysfunctional family environment will lead to a sense of deprivation in young people. When there is a lack of parental supervision, it is most likely that these young people get involved in violent activities. In most cases, it has been seen that when there is exposure of young people to violence, the risk of gang involvement increases to a large extent¹. We cannot underestimate the aspect of peer influence on gang development in youth. In most cases, bad company leads to such aspects that are destructive for society. If we discuss the main consequences of youth Gangs, we may come to know that crime is an important consequence of it. When young people pay less heed to their objective of studies and get involved in violent activities, it will give rise to crime in that particular society. Such an increase in crime rate can bitterly affect the whole community. The emotional impacts of gang involvement are depressing. It has been evident that such gang involvement may cause an increase in stress levels along with anxiety and sometimes trauma as well. Now, we are going to understand the term urban Security². Urban Security usually refers to those important measures that are usually taken to ensure the security of the population living in urban areas.

There are some important and useful objectives of urban security which we are going to understand here. Crime prevention is the most important objective of

¹ Sullivan, J. P. (2011). From drug wars to criminal insurgency: Mexican cartels, criminal enclaves and criminal insurgency in Mexico and Central America. Implications for global security.

² Jaramillo, C. D. (2024). Dificultades de la tipificación del delito de child grooming en España: análisis y delimitación de los distintos elementos que lo componen. *Revista electrónica de ciencia penal y criminología*, 26(1).

urban Security³. Urban Security usually focuses on policing and surveillance of society so that crime can be reduced and prevented. If there is a high crime rate in any society, it means that there is less focus on the aspect of urban security at that place. The second most important objective of urban security is public safety. Urban Security has to take only those measures that are aimed at protecting citizens. For instance, there should be effective systems for emergency response and disaster management. These systems will explain the effectiveness of urban Security measures. Social cohesion is a unique objective of urban security these days. It has been said that urban security should take such initiatives which will encourage and promote social cohesion. In other words, these measures should work for community engagement⁴. When there is effective community engagement, the probability of any conflict or violence can be mitigated. If we particularly discuss youth Gangs in Madrid, we may say that cultural diversity is responsible for youth gang involvement there. As Madrid has much cultural diversity because of immigration, in many cases, it has been seen that young people get influenced by other cultures. In other cases, it has been also noticed that because of cultural diversity, there is intercultural conflict, and such conflict will result in youth gang formation⁵. Secondly, in the case of Madrid, we have seen that many marginalized communities are having issues of poverty and favoritism. So, in most cases, people of these marginalized communities are involved in violent activities. Mainly, there are two types of youth Gangs that are found in Madrid. These gangs are named Latin American gangs, and the other one is named street gangs. Latin American gangs have roots in some countries of Latin America, and these are the most prominent youth gangs. Street gangs are those groups that get involved in violent activities because of some territorial issue. In the case of Mexico, it has been seen that many complex factors are responsible for youth gang involvement. The most important factor is poverty. Because of poverty, there is limited access to resources such as education and employment; in this way, these young people have more inclination towards violent activities. Recent studies have shown that there is much exposure of people to violence in Mexico⁶. The most common form of this violence is domestic violence. Such kind of domestic violence increases the risk of gang involvement in Mexico. Organized Crime is also an important leading factor for youth gang involvement in Mexico. Groups of

³ Chavez Villegas, C. (2018). *Youth and organised crime in ciudad Juarez, Mexico: An exploration of contributing factors*

⁴ Romero, M. (2000). State violence, and the social and legal construction of Latino criminality: From el bandido to gang member. *Denv. UL Rev.*, 78, 1081.

⁵ Müller, M.-M. (2010). Community policing in Latin America: lessons from Mexico city. *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe/European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 21-37.

⁶ Miguel Cruz, J. (2010). Central American maras: from youth street gangs to transnational protection rackets. *Global crime*, 11(4), 379-398.

people commit most crimes, and such engagement of people in violent activities may give rise to the formation and involvement of youth gangs⁷. There is a stringent need to address this kind of youth gang involvement. The most important strategy can be the aspect of prevention programs. This kind of program will provide particular alternatives such as job training. In this way, people will become busy and useful, and they will not get involved in violent activities. The second most important strategy can be community-based initiatives⁸. These initiatives are aimed at engaging the local community in various activities so that there will be an increase in trust level within that particular community. Government support can be an effective strategy to dealing with such youth gang involvement⁹. When the government provides support and resources to cope with those factors that are causing gang involvement, there will be an improvement in the condition of urban security as well¹⁰. The Spanish governments have reacted with legal repression and community reach-out programs with mixed success.

Mexico City, on the other hand, is associated with an even stronger gang culture, which is more embedded in the social fabric of the country and closely connected with drug trafficking and organized crime. Participation of young people in gangs, including ones called "maras" and local cartels, occurs through the factors of poverty, absence of opportunities, and normativization of violence in life. The militarization of law enforcement response has resulted in further estrangement of the affected communities in addition to perpetuating even more violence in such situations. Prevention and reintegration initiatives in civil society appear promising but are underfunded and uncoordinated. The above comparative analysis emphasizes the relevance of contextualized response to youth gang issues of insecurity in cities.

1. *Research Objective*

The main objective of this research is to discuss youth gangs along urban security related to Madrid and Mexico. We came to conclude that there is an increase in crime rate in Madrid and Mexico Because of these kinds of youth gang involvement.

⁷ Campesi, G. (2010). Policing, urban poverty and insecurity in Latin America: The case of Mexico City and Buenos Aires. *Theoretical Criminology*, 14(4), 447-471.

⁸ Sonneveld, M. (2009). Security at stake: Dealing with violence and public (in) security in a popular neighborhood in Guadalajara, Mexico. In *Youth violence in Latin America: Gangs and juvenile justice in perspective* (pp. 45-62). Springer.

⁹ García, J. M. M., & López, M. J. M. (2015). Group violence and migration experience among Latin American youths in justice enforcement centers (Madrid, Spain). *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 18, E85.

¹⁰ Ballesté-Isern, E., & Feixa, C. (2022). Creating insecurity through youth street groups and applying security for control and governance. A case study of Barcelona Latin kings. *Critical Criminology*, 30(3), 741-756.

II. Literature Review

Researchers claim that violent acts are not random actions but are performed with full strategic planning. In Santo Tomas slum streets, the criminal acts are performed with strategy. The gangs that commit crime-related activities are well-trained. The main agenda of performing a crime with planning is to gain popularity in the criminal world. A strong, violent act makes crime gangs more powerful and improves their reputation in the criminal world circles¹¹. Studies reveal that people who migrated from Mexico to the United States changed their village living conditions when they returned with new and innovative ideas. The migration of Mexicans abroad has greatly helped Mexicans to reshape their identity as an individual nation¹². Studies reveal that maintaining cohesion in social work is possible when accurate information is provided to the people belonging to a cohesive social society. However, due to misleading information, the democratic and social societies of Mexico are facing many problems. The major problem faced by Mexican people is violence. Misleading information makes people lose trust in their government, and therefore, the democratic government becomes weak. In Mexico, different efforts are made to make information more reliable and accurate to maintain the integrity of the democratic system¹³. Studies explain that people in the Mexican state use graffiti to express their thoughts and ideas. Graffiti is not allowed in Mexican states, but sometimes, it is considered a great source through which people can express their opinions. Graffiti is a form of art that is more specifically used by youth in Mexican states that gives them freedom to express ideas without restrictions¹⁴. Studies explain that it is important to provide youth with safety so that they can easily communicate their ideas with the researchers studying their life stories¹⁵. Studies reveal that in Spain, Latino gangs are famous. These gangs have gained popularity in the last twenty years. Due to their power and strong bonds, the general public fears working with these gangs. These gangs are renowned for selling drugs and committing crimes to maintain their image¹⁶. Many researchers elaborate that people's lives are connected. Young Chronotopes is a term that explains this interconnection between youths' lives. These interconnecting

¹¹ Alvarez, M., & Ruiz-Tagle, J. (2025). Street Conflicts: Capitalization Strategies of Violence in Santo Tomás Slum (La Pintana, Chile). *Deviant Behavior*, 1-18.

¹² Amador II, F. (2024). *Emigrants, Nations & the Remaking of Rural Mexico* State University of New York at Stony Brook].

¹³ Breuer, A. (2024). *Information integrity and information pollution: Vulnerabilities and impact on social cohesion and democracy in Mexico*. IDOS Discussion Paper.

¹⁴ Bruce, C. F. (2024). *Voices in Aerosol: Youth Culture, Institutional Attunement, and Graffiti in Urban Mexico*. University of Texas Press.

¹⁵ Feixa-Pàmpols, C., Sánchez-García, J., & Aubarell-Solduga, G. (2024). Ethics, research policy and practice: changes, challenges and dilemmas in ethnographic youth research. In *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Youth* (pp. 429-443). Edward Elgar Publishing.

¹⁶ Feixa, C. (2025). Latino gangs in Spain: from the Latin Kings & Queens to the Dominican don't play. *European Journal of Social Work*, 28(1), 13-24.

relations of young children help in identifying their past and present identity¹⁷. Researches declare that the biggest violent act in Mexico was in 2006. The images of this massive, violent act were aired and created fear in people. The images of the violent acts of 2006 helped in comparing the violent acts of the past and present. Also, these violent act images provide evidence of the history of violent activities in Mexico¹⁸. It was determined that the voter turnout rate is affected due to violent activities in Mexico. People living in areas with high homicide and crime rates prefer not to cast a vote for anyone. This research paper explains that people tend to withdraw from their right to vote in elections when they feel unsafe in their region¹⁹. Many Scholars' studies explain that some areas close to the border feel neglected because they are considered inferior regions. The people of these areas are often prone to criminal and violent activities. Likewise, the community of Jimenez is considered an abused society because it faces more violent acts than other communities of the region²⁰. It was claimed by the researchers that in some scenarios, police work with criminals. The purpose of police collaborating with criminals is to gain money. However, some studies reveal that police work with criminals solely to gain control over criminal acts and also to aid the state in gaining power over criminals²¹.

A lot of scholars investigated that the Mexican state police fight against crime in most cases, but sometimes, the legal system saves some criminals from criminal punishment. These hidden acts of the legal system to save some powerful criminals from crime-related punishments create distrust in the people of Mexico towards their legal system²². It was suggested that controlling criminal acts through military-aided actions provides no positive results in overcoming crime rates. However, the efforts of local civil society in identifying criminal acts hold great importance in Mexico. Violent acts are more easily addressed when people in civil society contribute to the process of crime detection²³. Research explained that CJNG is involved in major drug selling and criminal activities. This gang of criminals is mighty and is a great threat to both Mexico and the United States. The

¹⁷ Feixa, C., & Strecker, T. (2024). Youth Chronotopes: The Living Spaces and Times of Young People. In *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies* (pp. 693-710). Springer.

¹⁸ Fernandez Ayarzagotia, M. (2024). *Tracing violence and cruelty in Mexico's visual culture. Images of violence and their effects on subjectivity and the social bond* Goldsmiths, University of London].

¹⁹ Hernández-Gutiérrez, J. C., & Recuero-López, F. (2024). Violence, Insecurity and Turnout in Mexico. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (REIS)*, 185(185), 79-96.

²⁰ Jiménez, M. (2025). Jiménez Monitoring the Border, the "Abused-Community Syndrome," and the Era of Globalization. *Warriors for Social Justice and Equality: Maria Jiménez of Houston and Mexican American Activists*(12), 115.

²¹ Lerch, A. (2024). Police protection rackets and political modernity in Mexico. *Politics & Society*, 52(1), 3-35.

²² Long, T., & Smith, B. T. (2025). State, crime, and violence in Mexico, 1920-2000: arbiters of impunity, agents of coercion. *Past & Present*, 266(1), 229-263.

²³ Lopez Torres, Y. A. (2024). *Responding to criminal violence in Mexico: The role of civil society amid subnational democratisation* University of York].

international community has declared CJNG a terrorist gang that aims to destroy the health of people by selling deadly drugs²⁴. Researchers highlighted that police violence is a serious issue, as this violence can greatly impact youth mental health. Police violence is different from other types of violent acts, but its impact on youth is questionable²⁵. Many researchers suggested that women who cross borders face more threats related to violent acts. Women at the borders face violence because of their vulnerable state. Also, improper protection provided by the government is one of the reasons for women's violence at the border. This overall situation of violence against women explains the inadequacy of government policies to protect women in Mexican society²⁶. Research explains that some communities in Mexico state have strong bonds with each other, but this strong bonding could also be a great danger to the whole society. To make the bond strong, people in these communities tend to commit extremely violent crimes that put the whole region in great danger²⁷. Scholars explain that the Iron Fist policy influences the decrease in suicide and other crime rates. The iron fist policy allows legal frameworks to stop the activities of criminals and also to punish criminals according to the social justice system.

The actions taken under the Iron Fist policy have brought positive outcomes by reducing crime rates in Mexico. However, the impact of this policy on a democratic society is concerning²⁸. Researcher explained that in Mexico, women's care activists are working to protect women from violent acts. This activist approach helps in reducing the rate of Femicidal violence acts. The activists' women's care movement also encourages the implementation of a modern justice system for protecting women's rights²⁹. Moreover, in Mexico and nearby states, women activist uses rap music to promote their freedom movement. The music symbolizes that black women's rights are as important as any other rights in the country, and it also explains the old traditional norms where women were considered weak in a male-dominated society³⁰. Researchers explain that immigrant children face

²⁴ Manaut, R. B., & Torres, J. Á. G. (2025). The Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación: The most significant security challenge in the Mexico-United States relationship. *Third Generation Gangs and Transnational Cartels: A Small Wars Journal—El Centro Anthology*.

²⁵ Moreno, F. (2025). Conceptualizing Police Violence for Research on Youth Exposure to Community Violence. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 41(2), 311-328.

²⁶ Moya, E. M., Chavez-Baray, S. M., Ravelo-Blancas, P., & Báez-Ayala, S. (2025). MIGRANT WOMEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND VIOLENCE IN THE US-MEXICO BORDER REGION. *Walled: Barriers, Migration, and Resistance in the US-Mexico Borderlands*, 115.

²⁷ Nussio, E. (2024). The “dark side” of community ties: Collective action and lynching in Mexico. *American sociological review*, 89(4), 708-734.

²⁸ Paradela-López, M., & Antón, J.-I. (2025). Has the iron fist against criminal gangs really worked in El Salvador? *Defence and Peace Economics*, 1-16.

²⁹ Rocha, V. D. R. (2024). *Countertopographies of Care: The Rise of Care-Activism in the Movement for Women's Rights Mexico*. The Pennsylvania State University.

³⁰ Villanueva Martínez, M. d. P. (2024). *Geographies of sonic intersections: mapping Black and Indigenous women's rap music and activism in Cali (Colombia) and Oaxaca (Mexico)*

violence-related crime during their journey. The violent acts develop lifelong trauma in children. These traumatized children provided with counseling so that their mental health does not lead them to be part of violent gangs³¹. Research claimed that brown mothers living near the border region in the US are well-experienced in tackling violence-related acts in the border area. Their experience helps them not to get oppressed by violent activities in the border region. Brown mothers residing near border areas play a prominent role in protecting their young children from criminal acts³². Research highlight that the fight against crime requires a different strategic approach in different regions. There is no one solution to all crime-related practices. To stop crime activities from spreading in the region, it is important to devise crime policies according to the political and geographical dynamics of the region³³. It was claim that in Mexico, most people belonging to the Catholic group tend to perform violent acts in the region. In some cultures, the religious values of people allow them to indulge in violent activities. while some people highly forbid indulging in violent acts³⁴. Many researchers suggested that the investigation process carried out across the border region of Mexico is affected by capitalist policies. Also, the journalists of the south region play a major role in educating people about the safety of the region³⁵. Researchers explained the murder of Kiki cameraman in the year 1985 in Mexico, which shows that there was a deep relationship links between the drug mafia and the government system in Mexico. This whole situation explains that the complex, violent actions executed in Mexico are under the government's control³⁶. Many case studies declared that criminals have gained access to some of the natural resources in the process of fighting against legal groups. It means dealing with criminal groups involves dealing with the drug trafficking problem and other violence-related crimes³⁷. It has been declared that educational institutions in LAC allow people to understand the psychology behind criminal acts in the region. Also, safety organizations play a prominent part in making America a safer place. Providing a solution to the social community on a religious basis for stopping violent acts in the state is a big step in

³¹ Albornoz, Y. E. (2024). Migrant Children and Legislation: Integrating Knowledge about Trauma into Policy.

³² Bejarano, C., & Morales, M. C. (2024). *Frontera Madre (hood): Brown Mothers Challenging Oppression and Transborder Violence at the US-Mexico Border*. University of Arizona Press.

³³ Blattman, C. (2024). *Bad medicine: Why different systems of organized crime demand different solutions*.

³⁴ Ceci, L. (2024). *Catholics and Political Violence in the Twentieth Century: A Global History*. Taylor & Francis.

³⁵ Cheas, K. (2025). Psychological capital and safety in Global North-South cooperation: A field analysis of collaborative investigative journalism across the US-Mexico border. *Journalism*, 26(4), 781-799.

³⁶ Coleman, M. (2024). Camarena as Context: Mexico, Drug Cartels, and Structures of Insecurity. In *Handbook of Terrorist and Insurgent Groups* (pp. 372-381). CRC Press.

³⁷ Covert, J. (2024). *Natural Resource Theft, Huachicol, and Criminal Diversification in the War on Drugs: A Green Criminology Approach to Mexico's Criminal Violence*

making the region peaceful³⁸. It was highlighted that criminal activities have diversified in the region due to the increase in drug-selling crimes. Studies show that drug trafficking and homicide-related crime are connected and are caused by different factors. To effectively tackle these two crime rates in Mexico, strategic planning is required³⁹. It was predicted that in Mexico, extreme rivalry is observed between different healthy communities of society. This rivalry results in the development of a society with dominant, aggressive behavior. This shows that the history of conflict in people runs in families, and with time, the rivalry and hatred for each other increase, resulting in extreme violence⁴⁰. Many Scholars studies reveal that in Mexico, organized crime organizations are effectively combated using a properly developed security system. The security system in Mexico is developed to track criminal activities and also to target the main corruption hub that encourages criminal actions.

The security reforms are efficient in eradicating the deep roots of corruption in society⁴¹. Studies suggest that the urbanization process in Latin America is very advanced, but despite urban areas' progress in Latin America, it has high crime rates. Also, the working of governance in urban areas of Latin America is poorly functional. Collaborative efforts made by social welfare communities can help in dealing with the social issues faced by urban areas in Latin America⁴². Research explains that during the rule of President AMLO in Mexico, the state faced a lot of governance problems. The Tetranstornation idea given by the president made the state more backward in terms of social performance⁴³. Studies based on surveys made by researchers predict that the organized crime rate in Mexico has made the crime rate in the state more extreme. Most immigrants faced extreme violence while migrating to Mexico from Central America. People who were subjected to more violent activities during migration were the ones who were in a vulnerable condition⁴⁴. Moreover, the Mexican humanitarian communities have faced a lot of problems in managing the people who migrated to Mexico. The role of the

³⁸ D'Agostino, T. (2024). Safety, Belonging, and Forgiveness: Exploring the Role of Faith-Based Educational Organizations in Mitigating Gang Violence in Central America and the Caribbean. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 99(5), 578-595.

³⁹ Fondevila, G., García-Tejeda, E., & Massa, R. (2025). The diversification of drug trafficking organizations: Testing Spatial–Temporal association between extortion and homicide in Mexico. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 1-25.

⁴⁰ Genoways, T. (2025). *Tequila Wars: José Cuervo and the Bloody Struggle for the Spirit of Mexico*. WW Norton & Company.

⁴¹ Haider, H. (2024). Addressing Organised Crime and Security Sector Reform and Governance.

⁴² Irazábal, C. (2024). Latin American Perspectives on the Urban Century: Planning Challenges and Opportunities. *Latin American Perspectives*, 51(2), 116-124.

⁴³ Macip, R. F. (2024). "Tetranstornation" as retrogression: AMLO's Mexico beyond alternation. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 1-16.

⁴⁴ Pries, L., Savcı, B. Ş. Z., Villalever, X. A., & Morillón, O. C. (2024). Forced migration and organized violence between the Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico: Evidence from a 2020 survey. In *Forced Migration across Mexico* (pp. 89-111). Routledge.

humanitarian communities was to help people in the process of migration. Still, due to external forces and influences, these communities were involved in the illegal transport of drugs. It was revealed through studies that humanitarian groups play ambivalent roles as they both aid and disturb the overall migration process of people in Mexico⁴⁵. Many studies explain that people in Mexico feel unsafe in their region due to higher crime rates. Such unsafe circumstances in the region influence people to migrate to a safer state. This mindset of migrating from the region is more prevalent in the urban society of Mexico. Moreover, increased homicide rates in Mexico have influenced people to move to a city where they can live in peace without any fear⁴⁶. Studies explain that some crime-associated street gangs in Mexico have taken extreme action against police after one of their main leaders was killed by police groups. This situation explains that these gangs are very dangerous and can kill anyone for their benefit⁴⁷. Studies claim that reporters face great hurdles in reporting the fight against drug-related terrorist groups. The criminal gangs in Mexico are so powerful and controlling that they control all the small crime groups in the regional areas. The massive controlling ability of criminal groups makes it difficult for the government to track and minimize criminal practices.

The press agencies in Mexico have been silenced by criminal gangs so that their illegal actions are not exposed to the international community⁴⁸. Studies determine that Mexican urban areas are using weapon-based power to control the migration of people in Mexico. This powerful control of urban government over its people to stop migration has created distrust among the Mexican people. The lifestyle of people living in urban areas gets disturbed due to poor peace condition in the country⁴⁹. Studies made by researchers predict that SGUs in Mexico have control over the criminals in prison. These SGU agencies thoroughly monitor the communities of criminals in prison and outside the prison. These police units are organized to carry out their action in a proper and organized way to target criminals in prison and outside the prison⁵⁰ (Figure 1)

⁴⁵ Rosales, E. H. (2025). *Ambivalent Humanitarianism and Migration Control: Colonial legacies and the Experiences of Migrants in Mexico*. Taylor & Francis.

⁴⁶ South, S. J., Trent, K., & Han, S. (2024). Exposure to violence and migration from Mexico to the United States. *Journal of international migration and integration*, 25(1), 281-307.

⁴⁷ Sullivan, J. P., & da Cruz, J. d. A. (2025). Third Generation Gangs Strategic Note No. 54: Milícia Arson Attacks in Retaliation for Police Action in Rio de Janeiro. *Third Generation Gangs and Transnational Cartels: A Small Wars Journal—El Centro Anthology*.

⁴⁸ Trejo, G., & Skigin, N. (2024). Silencing the Press in Criminal Wars: Why the War on Drugs Turned Mexico into the World's Most Dangerous Country for Journalists. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1-22.

⁴⁹ Van Ramshorst, J. P. (2025). From "killing deserts" to "killing cities": weaponizing urban landscapes in the US-Mexico borderlands. *Urban Geography*, 46(4), 940-956.

⁵⁰ Zapata, B. A. (2024). *Understanding the Factors Associated With the Targeting of Prison Gangs by Specialized Gang Units (SGUs) in the United States* [The University of Texas at El Paso].

III. Framework

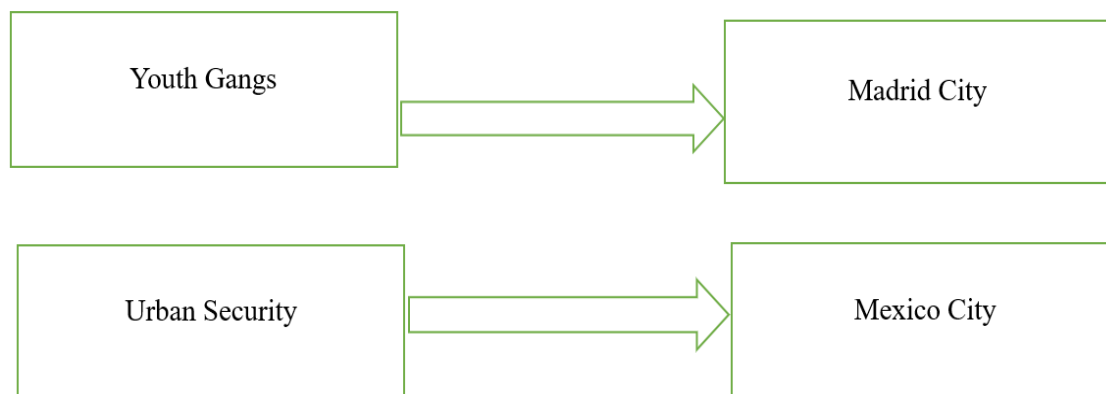


Figure 1: The Frame Work

IV. Methodology

This study employs a comparative quantitative and qualitative case study approach to examine the relationship between youth gangs and urban security in Madrid (Spain) and Mexico City (Mexico). The methodology is designed to provide in-depth insights into the structural, social, and institutional dynamics that contribute to gang proliferation and their impacts on urban environments.

1. *Research Design*

The research is based on a multi-method related to quantitative and qualitative design, combining included case study analysis, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis pertaining to the variables.

2. *Case Study Selection Criteria*

Madrid and Mexico City were selected as case studies based on the following criteria:

- High incidence of youth gang activity
- Diverse urban environments (developed vs. developing city context)
- Contrasting security policies and policing models
- Availability of data and institutional access

The comparative aspect highlights regional similarities and differences in gang dynamics and security challenges.

3. *Data Collection Methods*

3.1. *Interviews*

To do measurements, this research study used semi-structured interviews online

via the Zoom app. In this interview, the local law enforcement officials, social workers, former gang members, and community leaders as well as urban security analysis used as participants. Questions focus on gang recruitment, territorial control, crime patterns, and institutional responses.

3.2. Data Analysis

This research study used Smart PLS software to analyze the data and also conducted comparative analysis related to the effectiveness of contrasting policy, identifying structural and social differences. This research study also analyzes how economy, governance, and policing style, affect gang influence among them.

V. Smart PLS Algorithm Model

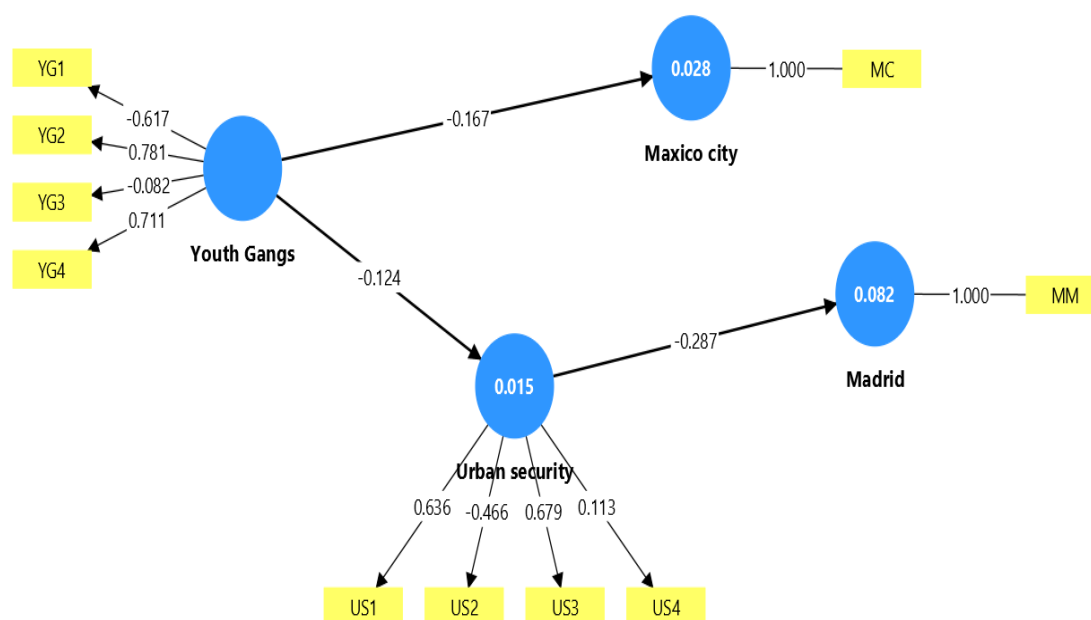


Figure 2: Smart PLS Algorithm Model

The above model Shown in figure 2 represents the smart PLS Algorithm model between youth gangs, urban security-related Mexico City, and Madrid. The youth gangs -0.617, 0.781, -0.082, and 0.711 show 61%, 78%, 8%, and 71%, respectively. Urban security shows that 63%, 46%, 67%, and 11%, show positive rates between them respectively.

VI. Implications

1. Immigrant People's Involvement in Youth Gangs

In Mexico, youth gangs are involved in various criminal activities which make

them part of criminal organizations. Youth gangs consist of young children who are involved in criminal activities without having proper knowledge about the crime. Social media uses the term youth gang to create panic in people regarding the involvement of youth in crime-related activities. The intervention process for controlling and tackling youth gangs has become complex because of the buzz created by social media regarding the bad social image of youth gangs. The youth gangs of Latin American origin have been regarded as Madrid gangs because of their roots in Latin America. Most of the members of the Madrid gangs are immigrants from Latin America. Several factors influence the involvement of immigrant youth in the youth gangs of Madrid. The first factor is receiving fewer opportunities than the local people. Lacking fundamental opportunity rights makes immigrant people join criminal gangs.

The second factor is discrimination; when immigrant people felt they were not given equal rights in Latin America, they tended to join illegal criminal activities. All these factors contributed to the development of youth-based criminal gangs. In Mexico, these gangs provide people with their rights and also provide them protection. The facilities and protection given to members of youth gangs develop enthusiasm in them to commit more criminal activities. Also, the development of youth gangs in Mexico is a major socio-economic issue. This social issue created a more discriminatory environment in Mexico, leading to more people joining youth gangs to fulfill their fundamental rights to get education and other opportunities. By giving shelter and help to vulnerable people in Mexican society, the criminal gangs have gained the trust of immigrant people. This trust-building opportunity helped such gangs to gain people's support and to flourish their activities in different parts of Mexico. By providing immigrant people with fundamental rights and opportunities, the involvement of people in youth crime gangs is minimized in Mexico.

2. Youth Gangs Deep Ties with Local Crime Gangs

Various surveys have revealed that the geographical dimensions of Mexico are very diverse. The diversity of the region allows the youth gangs to become more spread in the area. Most street gangs are also the part of youth gangs, depending on the crime in which they are involved. The presence of local street gangs in Mexico holds more importance than the presence of transitional gangs. This means that youth gangs influence all activities of crime performed by local street gangs. Youth gangs seem to make crimes more common and less violent because of the help of local street gangs. Moreover, the diversified geography of Mexico allows different crime gangs to hold their position and power in other regions of the state. Surveys made on youth gangs' connections revealed that these gangs have made strong alliances with political parties to perform their dangerous tasks without any

restrictions. The youth gangs involved in the drug trafficking process does not face any obstacle in transporting drugs because of the support from political leaders. Majorly, youth gangs operate independently, but in some cases, these gangs tie up with other criminal organizations to make their illegal task easier to execute. The strong connection of youth gangs with other criminal gangs gives them the power to make their violent acts extreme and uncontrollable. But to control all of these illegal acts, governmental legal systems should train their security officials to tackle these gangs with complete preparation. Police response to these gangs more intensely.

Most police officials use social media to make their anti-crime responses active and workable. Social media allows police teams to make the public awareness because their safety is the priority of the government. Police in Mexico are taking different initiatives to keep the young generation from getting misled by crime gangs. In educational institutes, youths are getting educated about the unlawful and illegal acts of the youth crime which gangs mostly performed so that the youth get knowledge about their role in protecting society from these gangs. Youth should know that how they can manage their social life.

3. Corruption and the Impact of Youth Gangs on Urban Life

Corruption in the law and governance system in Mexico has hindered the process of stopping the establishment of youth gangs. These gangs are thriving and growing because of the poorly managed law system in the region. Military responses against youth gangs are highly intense, resulting to harm the local people. Also, the involvement of legal authorities in the drug trafficking process has made the justice system poor in its functioning. To make the law in Mexico stronger, it is important to eradicate the deep roots of corruption in the state. Seeing the participation of people in youth gangs, Madrid as well as Mexico City have adopted different social programs to divert the attention of their youth from these crime gangs. By redirecting the youth's attention through social programs, both cities have observed less involvement of youth in criminal activities. Numerous NGOs are working in Mexico to guide young students about the importance of a good life. Furthermore, in Mexico and Madrid regions, moral panic is seen in people due to the active participation of their youth in criminal actions. The people of Mexico consider that the involvement of their youth in these unethical and unlawful activities needs to be stopped at any cost. In Mexico, many youth gangs badly impact the security of urban areas, leading to increased crime cases reported in these areas. But in Madrid, most criminal activities are localized and do not affect the people of metropolitan areas. A higher degree of violent activity is faced by Mexico than by Madrid. This overall situation concludes that the high crime rate in

urban areas of Mexico is associated with the high criminal power of youth gangs in these areas. In Mexico, people are losing their trust in the law system because of increased violent acts, not only in rural areas but also in urban areas. Banning all the youth gangs' activities in high-profile Mexican states is the utmost duty of the legal justice and law system of the Mexican state.

VII. Descriptive Statistic

Table 1: Result of Descriptive Statistic

Name	No.	Mean	Median	Scale Min	Scale Max	Standard Deviation	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness	Cramér-Von Mises P-Value
YG1	1	1.640	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.592	-0.626	0.324	0.000
YG2	2	1.680	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.646	-0.662	0.434	0.000
YG3	3	1.660	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.587	-0.610	0.258	0.000
YG4	4	1.720	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.601	-0.525	0.217	0.000
US1	5	1.800	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.693	-0.885	0.298	0.000
US2	6	1.720	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.694	-0.846	0.452	0.000
US3	7	1.800	2.000	1.000	4.000	0.748	0.040	0.650	0.000
US4	8	1.680	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.646	-0.662	0.434	0.000
MM	9	1.480	1.000	1.000	3.000	0.608	-0.133	0.905	0.000
MC	10	1.720	2.000	1.000	3.000	0.665	-0.736	0.397	0.000

The above result shown in table 1 demonstrates that descriptive statistical analysis results represent the mean values, the median rates, and the standard deviation values and it also explains the skewness rates of each variable, including dependent and independent. The YG1,2,3,4 factors are considered independent variable results, showing that their mean values are 1.640, 1.680, 1.660, and 1.720. All of them present positive average values of the mean. The standard deviation rate is 59%, 64%, 58%, and 60% deviate from mean values. The result shows that the overall probability rate is 0.000, which shows 100% significant level of each variable. The US1,2,3,4 factors are considered dependent variables. Its mean values are 1.800, 1.720, and 1.680. All values show a positive average value of the mean. The overall minimum rate is 1.000, the maximum value is 3.000, and the median rate is 2.000 respectively. The MM is the mediator variable. The result shows that its mean value is 1.480 and the standard deviation value is 60%, respectively. The MC also presents that the mediator variable result shows its mean value is 1.720 positive average rate. The standard deviation rate is 66%, which deviates from the mean.

VIII. Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Table 2: Result of Correlation Coefficient Analysis

	YG1	YG2	YG3	YG4	US1	US2	US3	US4	MM	MC
YG1	1.000	-0.092	0.051	-0.171	0.215	-0.099	0.018	0.065	-0.131	0.049
YG2	-0.092	1.000	0.082	0.490	-0.009	-0.021	-0.132	0.090	-0.067	-0.162
YG3	0.051	0.082	1.000	-0.270	-0.069	-0.086	-0.109	-0.076	0.121	0.064
YG4	-0.171	0.490	-0.270	1.000	0.154	0.052	-0.036	-0.231	-0.125	-0.146
US1	0.215	-0.009	-0.069	0.154	1.000	0.008	0.077	-0.098	-0.199	-0.165
US2	-0.099	-0.021	-0.086	0.052	0.008	1.000	-0.069	-0.155	0.129	0.090
US3	0.018	-0.132	-0.109	-0.036	0.077	-0.069	1.000	-0.008	-0.185	0.129
US4	0.065	0.090	-0.076	-0.231	-0.098	-0.155	-0.008	1.000	-0.016	-0.069
MM	-0.131	-0.067	0.121	-0.125	-0.199	0.129	-0.185	-0.016	1.000	-0.113
MC	0.049	-0.162	0.064	-0.146	-0.165	0.090	0.129	-0.069	-0.113	1.000

The above result shown in table 2 represents the correlation coefficient analysis between YG and US. The overall result shows that there are some positive and some negative interrelations between them. The overall result also shows a significant relation between them.

IX. Discussion

The following examples explain that how insecurity has a multi-dimensional and instance-specific nature in the cities Madrid and Mexico. Although, with the separate backgrounds and institutionalized systems, these two cities are separate and divided by geographical distance, but these two cities are grappling with the same kind of problem, albeit on how to tackle the menace of youth gang violence in a way that is sustainable, socially inclusive, and security conscious. The objective of the research was to deconstruct the roots, structure, and impact of the youth gangs in all urban environments and made the concerning urban security government in globalized societies which have lack of equality. The findings identify some ideal conclusions, which combine social, political, and institutional dimensions. On the one hand, youth gang formation is related to socio-economic exclusion in a dramatic way. On the other hand, both Madrid and Mexico City have been facing high level of poverty concerns, unemployment rates, absence of education services. These all factors in turn trigger youth towards criminal activities. The youths, particularly youths who have ethnic and immigrant marginalized identities, are likely to become alienated from mainstream institutions. The other place of social structure found in the form of gangs is the source of identity, protection, and meaning. This phenomenon is exemplified by immigrant juvenile gang groups such as the Latin Kings in Madrid and similar cases in Mexico City. These gangs tend to exhibit a more commercialized and violent character, often being integrated into larger organized crime networks and

narcotics economies. Furthermore, the roles of identity, belonging, and symbolic identification are critically important and cannot be underestimated. Beyond material incentives, youths are drawn to gangs to fulfill emotional and psychological needs that remain unmet by familial, educational, and societal institutions. The reduction in the efficiency of the integration policies in Madrid has resulted in the growth of a parallel society where the fact of being a member of a gang results in the pride of belonging and the feeling of brotherhood. Additionally, in Mexico City, elements such as hyper-masculinity, survivalist attitudes, and the glorification of gang lifestyles through social media contribute to the institutionalization of this identity among young people. The partnership between local governments, schools, social workers, and religious associations can be the network, which spread the knowledge and awareness among the underage people and help to control the criminal activities. In this research, there is also the identification of the issues related to the international migration of gangs and the transgression of knowledge. The research analysis gained from the community of these cities in the world might seem to be the lesson that can be transferred to the idiosyncratic practices. Lastly, the paper affirms the interpretation that youth gangs are not an identity which exists in solid form but a fluid or dynamic state. After investigation, it is investigating that there are a large number of youths in criminal gangs have expressed their desires to leave criminal activities, and they are looking for a chance to do so. The research in these two cities has shown good outcomes in gang desistance programs, life coaching, job training, and mentoring programs. They must be kept but funded well and built into the greater schemes of city regeneration and social integration. Some of the gestures are through reintegrative actions such as an attempt to exit the gang, publicly celebrating, or a position to go to work, which may help in transforming the violence narratives into a story of success and survivorship.

X. Conclusion

In conclusion, the gang culture has been generalized, particularly where states do not exist or equipped with aversive tendencies, shows that combating gangs is not just a security policy but has more significant impact on the change of culture and community. The other observation is that the state interventions have been problematic, unresponsive, and excessively militaristic. Police crackdowns, such as youth criminalization in Madrid, constituted an early intervention which worked in some instances where they only strengthened the gang's cohesion and resistance. With the help of the NGOs and the local authorities, the overall attitude of the Spanish government towards the issue of overtime, shifted towards the hybrid model of integrating the program of social reintegration with education activities and community policing. On the other hand, the response in Mexico City has been

mainly security-oriented, and this has been characterized by militarised policing, zero-tolerance, and lock-up. This kind of penalizing system has precipitated a cycle of violence and mistrust between the people and the authorities. In addition, impunity, corruption, and organizational instability have threatened the existence of law and order in the Mexican justice system. In cases where the actions of civil society occur (supported mentorship of the youth or intervention in arts), they are poorly funded, situation or trapped in small parcels of urban real estate. What becomes clear is that efficient strategies should be a long-term comprehensive action to resolve the structural causes of the root causes of the participation in gangs among the youth. These are not just poverty reduction and education transformation; these are spatial justice, city planning, and mental health treatment. There is also the need to increase community resilience through the participation models of governance because they include the youth in the policymaking process. Youths must not be termed as a menace, but they must be viewed as potential protagonists of change, which can be exploited through positive and constructive engagement. Research in Madrid shows that alternative provision and social legitimacy may be the means of a possible way out of gang life. Secondly, the security of cities cannot be segregated from democratic accountability, as well as social fairness. Brute force will most probably cause transitional tranquility, but the results would be synthetic tranquility and mistrust in official institutions. The binary of gang and state should (in this case) be the unwilling endorsement by repressive security policies of the marginalized youths who are more than happy to think that they have an enemy rather than a protector in the state. The insecurity worsens this alienation, and it also adds to the circle of violence. They should, therefore, be formulated in this way which can be applied in real and reasonable law-keeping and protection against misuse and overreach. The case study of Madrid and Mexico City also brings out the necessity of localized and situation-based interventions. Despite the transnational dimension to gang life (migration, transnational drug economies, and virtual networks), the most effective interventions happen at the local level, with broad knowledge, connections, and experience all being at the forefront. The experience of Madrid Community policing was successful since the officers got involved with the community where they performed. In equal proportion, the most promising pilot programs of the city of Mexico were local activist- and community-based groups who realized local needs and risks. The second valuable lesson that this comparative study highlights is the significant requirement of cross-sector cooperation. Governments alone have the responsibility of eradicating the issue of youth gangs. It requires integration in the sphere of education, health, housing, civil society, and law enforcement. Lastly, the youth gangs are believed to be the cause outside and a warning sign of insecurity in the cities of Madrid and Mexico City. They happen because of the

preserved disparities, personality crises, and government shortages. But life offers them opportunities to rethink the urban security problem on more democratic, participatory, and developmental lines, too. Rather than crime and punishment policies that only target youth gangs as propagators of crime, the policymakers should have to adopt rights-based and community-based approaches, where the prevention, reintegration, and justice are deployed. The precision in the findings of this research alters the concept of the researcher concerning idea of urban security, which is not violence but rather social harmonization, prospects, and confidence. Crime will be eradicated in cities when young people are mobilized instead of repressed as criminals, when the state becomes fair and participatory, and when cities will invest in the health of all their citizens, especially in those who are in the poorest condition. Knowledge can be spread by using the research results conducting in Madrid and Mexico City but also there is the hope that there will be social justice at the cornerstone of any push to a given city to trend towards security.

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