

Juvenile Delinquency in India: Causes, Consequences, and Legal Framework: A Brief Report

S Manikandan¹, Beema H², Laya Vijayan³

^{1,3} Assistant Professor, Instructor, College of Nursing Rajouri, BGSB University, Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir, IN

² Associate Professor, Azeezia College of Nursing, Kollam, Kerala, IN

Abstract: Juvenile delinquency is a matter of concern in India, representing wider socio-economic, psychological, and legal issues. The increasing crimes by children call for a thorough understanding of the underlying reasons, legislative steps, and rehabilitation. This research paper discusses the causes, implications, and legal scenario of juvenile delinquency in India, shedding light on prevention and policy interventions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This Review paper is written based on the comprehensive literature search of relevant articles and studies published within the past 10-year duration. The search was performed across various databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, WebMD, PsycINFO, Sage Journals, World Health Organization Databases, Wikipedia, ResearchGate, Academia.edu and books, Journals etc.

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is defined as offenses by those under the age of 18 years. Rapid urbanization, poverty, illiteracy, and peer pressure are the major factors contributing to delinquent behavior in India. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, establishes procedures to address juvenile offenders, focusing methodically on rehabilitation over punishment. Furthermore, it is also important to understand the dynamics of juvenile crime to plan effective intervention¹.

CURRENT STATISTICS: INDIA

Juvenile delinquency is a major issue in India, particularly among 16-to-18-year-old individuals. India's juvenile delinquency rate has changed significantly in recent years. About 60,000 juvenile crime cases were reported in 2023, a 12% increase, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). The most common offenses are assault, theft, and drug use, with the states of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh reporting the highest crime rates. Also, there is a 22% increase in violent crimes, including rape and murder, as compared to previous years. Around 75.2% of all juvenile offenders (29,084 out of 38,685) were arrested for both IPC and SLL offenses in the 31,591 juvenile cases reported overall in India, 2018^{2,3}.



Figure 01: Symbolic representation of a Juvenile Delinquent; Image Courtesy: -*Juvenile Delinquency in India: Legal Bites, Law & Beyond*.

Table 01: Year-wise Review Studies related to juvenile delinquency from 2005–2024.

Year	Author(s)	Title	Key Findings	Journal
2005	Bhattacharyya D4	Delinquency in Rural India	Rural poverty linked to theft and truancy	Sage Publications
2012	Acharya R, Singal S5	Cultural Factors in Urban India	Cultural disintegration in Delhi linked to gang activity	Int J Criminol Sociol
2015	Agarwal R6	Family and Delinquency	Parental neglect strongly correlated with recidivism	J Psychol Psychother Res

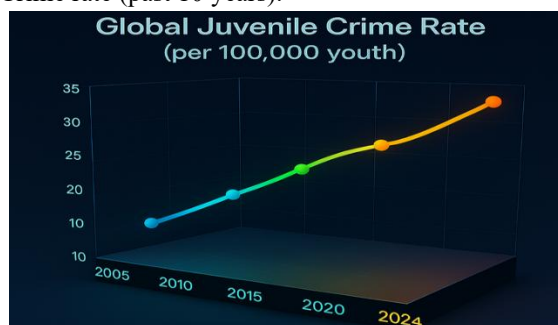
2016	Sharma V7	Juvenile Justice Act Analysis	Legal gaps in post-Nirbhaya reforms	Indian Law Rev
2017	Aggarwal R8	Socioeconomic Factors	Unemployment and slum residence as predictors	Indian Acad Appl Psychol
2018	Bhalla N et al.9	Rehabilitation Services	Lack of trained counselors in juvenile homes	Indian J Health Wellbeing
2018	Choudhary V, Srivastava R10	Psychological Interventions	CBT effective in reducing aggression	Indian J Criminol
2019	Bhalla G, Tripathi A11	Economic Impact	Juvenile crime costs ₹1200 crore annually	J Public Affairs
2019	Chakrabarti S, Singh SK12	Capacity Building	Training gaps in Juvenile Justice Boards	Indian J Health Wellbeing
2020	Choudhary D13	Comparative Study	Urban vs rural delinquency patterns	J Econ Dev People
2021	Choudhary N14	Community Participation	Local NGOs reduce recidivism by 30%	Indian J Criminol
2022	Yadav S15	Legal Framework Review	Act 2015 lacks clarity on mental health	IJSSHR
2022	Nayak B, Choudhury S16	Causes and Implications	Family income and supervision key predictors	ICISSET
2023	Jaipal S17	Policy Implications	Need for multi-sectoral collaboration	IJEMMASS
2023	Mehta M18	Juvenile Recidivism	Repeat offenders often untreated for trauma	J Youth Justice
2023	Singh A19	Gendered Delinquency	Girls underreported in crime statistics	Indian J Gender Stud
2024	Khan R20	Substance Abuse Link	Drug use precedes violent behavior	J Addict Behav
2024	Patel T21	School Dropout & Crime	Dropouts 3x more likely to offend	Educ Rev India
2024	Rao P22	Juvenile Homes Audit	40% homes lack basic facilities	Soc Policy India
2024	Verma S23	Legal Reform Needs	Advocates for restorative justice models	Indian Law J

Global Scenario

Table 02: Distribution of Global Juvenile Crime rate for the past 10 years²⁴⁻²⁹.

Year	Crime Rate (per 100,000 youth)	Interpretation
2005	12	Baseline level; relatively low juvenile crime rate.
2010	18	Noticeable increase; possibly due to socio-economic or policy shifts.
2015	25	Continued upward trend; suggests worsening juvenile crime conditions.
2020	30	Peak escalation; may reflect systemic issues or reporting improvements.
2024	34	Forecasted rise; indicates need for preventive interventions.

Figure 02: Line Diagram representing the exponential increase in the Global Juvenile Crime rate (past 10 years).



Causes of Juvenile Delinquency in India

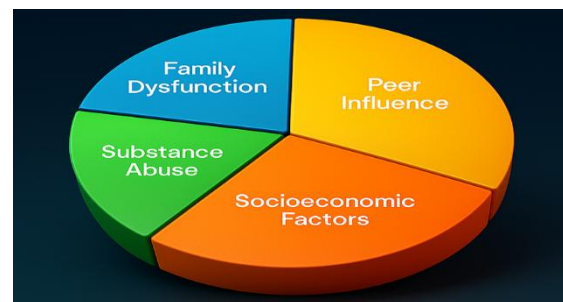


Figure 03: Graphical representation of factors responsible for juvenile delinquency^{24,25}

There are a variety of factors that cause juvenile delinquency, such as,

- **Socio-Economic Conditions:** Poverty, unemployment, and deprivation of education lead to increased vulnerability to criminal behaviour.³
- **Family Environment:** Pathological families, violence in the home, and neglectful parents contribute significantly to delinquent behaviour.³
- **Psychological Factors:** Deficiency in self-esteem, impulsiveness, and behavioral disorders frequently accompany criminal behaviour in juveniles.³
- **Peer Influence:** Peer association with delinquent peers makes criminal behaviour more likely.

Consequences of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile offenses have long-term effects, including,

- **Legal Implications:** According to Indian law, juveniles charged with serious offenses can be tried as adults.²

- **Social Stigma:** Offenders become shunned from society, hampering reintegration into society.²
- **Mental & Emotional Trauma:** Legal proceedings and prison life can contribute to psychological disturbances, such as depression and anxiety.²
- **Future Career & Opportunities:** Having a criminal record can impede education and future job opportunities.²

Juvenile Delinquency & Cybercrimes

Since the digital revolution, delinquency patterns have changed, reflecting in cybercrimes like hacking, identity theft, cyberbullying, and financial scams. To comprehend such crimes is necessary an interdisciplinary analysis that would include psychological, educational, and legal features.^{30,31}

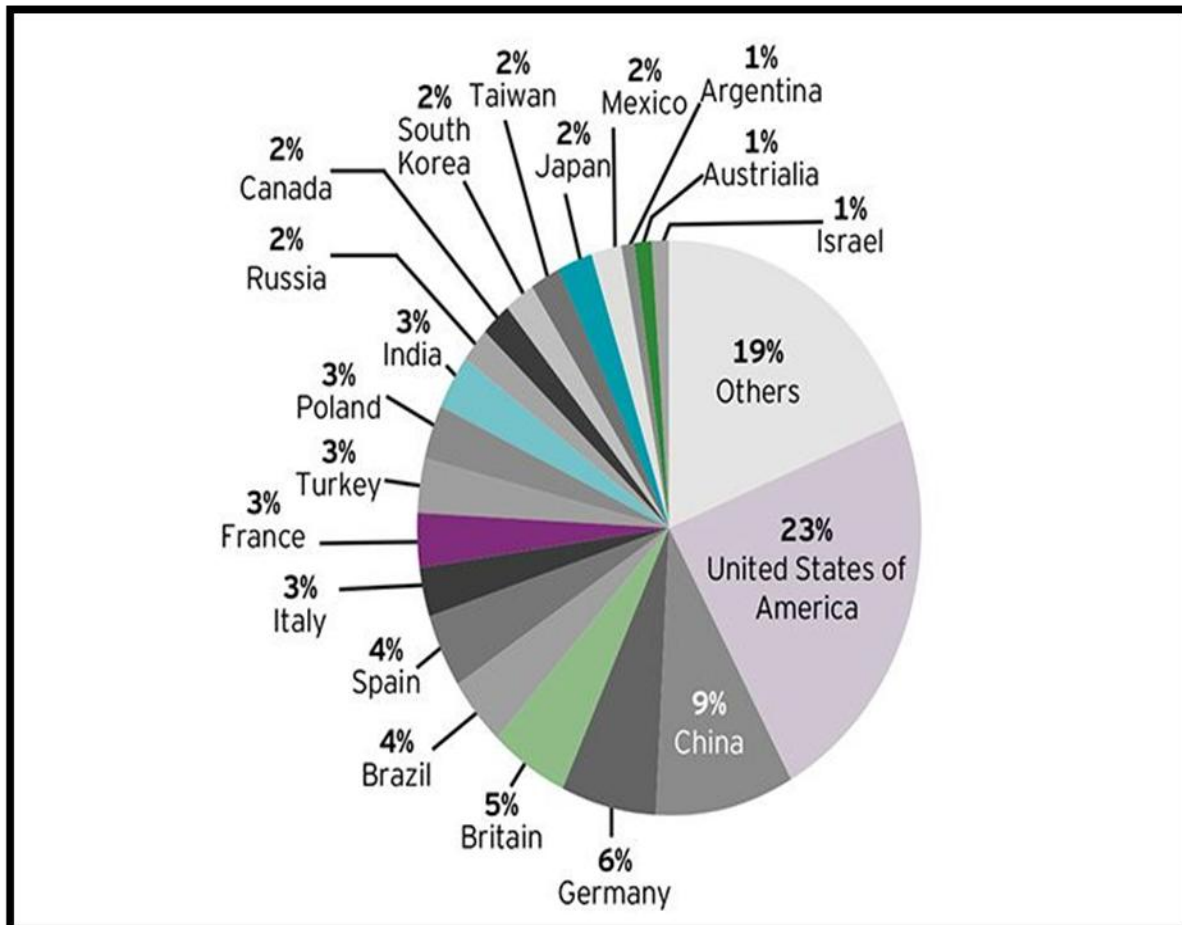


Figure 02: Pie Chart Showing the prevalence of Cybercrime in countries of the world.

(Image Credits: Securitylinkindia.com)

Legal Framework & Rehabilitation

India possesses a systemic legal framework for handling juvenile delinquency,

- Juvenile Justice Act, 2015: Suggests procedure for handling juvenile offenders with clear differentiation of petty, serious, and heinous offenses.³¹
 - Rehabilitation Programs: Offenders undergo skill development, vocational training, and counselling for reintegration in society.³¹
 - Observation Homes & Special Care: Establishments provide for psychological health and behavioral reformation of juveniles.³¹
- Ψ Judicial Method: Courts analyse every case based on intent, age, and nature of crime before imposing penalties or rehabilitation measures.³¹

Prevention Strategies

Efficient strategies to control juvenile delinquency are, Education & Awareness: Quality education to children lowers the vulnerability to crime.³²

Family Counselling: Improved family relations and domestic problem-solving prevent delinquency.³²

Community Engagement: Sport, arts, and social clubs promote positive associations.³²

Government Policies: Welfare programs for underprivileged youth prevent crime.³²

DISCUSSION

The discussion part points out the complexity of juvenile delinquency, where the interrelation of socio-economic status, peer culture, and education is accentuated. Future research must undertake longitudinal studies to determine the effect of intervention programs and policy modifications on juvenile offending rates in the long term. Juvenile delinquency continues to be a major issue worldwide with a myriad of socio-economic and psychological parameters contributing to its incidence. It is found that family dynamics, peer pressure, and socio-economic background have major implications in defining juvenile delinquent behaviour (Gupta and Kumar, 2021)³³. It has been repeatedly observed in studies that children who hail from poorer economic backgrounds or face domestic disharmony tend to be more involved in delinquent behaviour (National Records Bureau, 2015)³³. Research conducted in Vancouver investigated teenage vandalism and identified delinquent conduct as normally occurring in the context of peer groups, peer contagion, and

environmental solitude (Fairbank, 1965). This agrees with overall theories of criminology to the effect that delinquency is not always a solitary endeavour but rather one arising from interactions and environmental determinations. In addition, the research pointed out the difference in how various socio-economic classes experience and report on juvenile delinquency, where middle-class youths tend to evade formal legal action as opposed to lower-class peers³⁴. In addition, the success of rehabilitation schemes continues to be a matter of debate. Some studies call for tighter legal solutions, whereas others prefer psychological and social rehabilitation as more viable methods (Singh & Bhandari, 2021). Incorporating community-based programs, including counselling and vocational training, has proved effective in decreasing recidivism rates among juvenile delinquents³⁵.

CONCLUSION

Juvenile delinquency in India is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted approach. While punitive measures are necessary for grave offenses, rehabilitation remains the cornerstone of juvenile justice. Strengthening education, social support systems, and policy interventions can help mitigate juvenile crime and pave the way for a safer society.

Budget

Self

Conflicts of interest

None Declared.

Ethical clearance

Not required

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