

A Study on Factors Contributing Juvenile Delinquency in Coimbatore District

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Abstract—Juvenile delinquency has emerged as a significant socio-legal concern in contemporary India, reflecting deeper structural, psychological, and environmental issues affecting youth. Defined as unlawful or antisocial behaviour committed by individuals below the age of eighteen, juvenile delinquency is addressed through reformatory rather than punitive approaches under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. This study examines the nature, causes, and consequences of juvenile delinquency, with a focus on socio-economic, familial, educational, and psychological determinants. It also evaluates the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms such as Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, and Observation Homes in addressing delinquent behaviour. Adopting a descriptive qualitative research design, the study draws insights from juveniles in conflict with the law in observation homes in Coimbatore district. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns in lived experiences, highlighting the role of poverty, peer pressure, broken family structures, and lack of educational support. The research emphasizes the importance of preventive strategies, including community intervention, educational reforms, and psychological counselling. It concludes that a holistic, child-centric approach rooted in rehabilitation, reintegration, and social support is essential to effectively address juvenile delinquency and ensure long-term societal stability.

Index Terms—Juvenile Delinquency; Children in Conflict with Law; Rehabilitation; Juvenile Justice System.

I. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency refers to unlawful or socially unacceptable behaviour committed by individuals below the age of eighteen. Unlike adult criminality, juvenile offences are viewed through a reformatory

lens, recognizing that children are still in the process of psychological, emotional, and moral development. Society acknowledges that delinquent behaviour among juveniles often arises not from inherent criminal intent but from adverse environmental conditions, social neglect, and developmental challenges.

The increasing incidence of juvenile crimes such as theft, substance abuse, cybercrime, and violence reflects a troubling shift in youth behaviour patterns. This trend necessitates a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is not a result of a single factor; rather, it is a complex interplay of individual, familial, social, and economic influences. Family remains the primary unit shaping a child's behaviour. Dysfunctional family environments characterized by neglect, abuse, or lack of supervision often contribute to emotional instability and behavioural problems.

Peer influence is another crucial determinant. Adolescents, in their search for identity and belonging, are highly susceptible to peer pressure. Association with delinquent peer groups often leads to experimentation with risky behaviours. Educational institutions also play a significant role; negative school experiences such as academic failure, bullying, or lack of teacher support can alienate students, pushing them toward deviant behaviour.

Socio-economic conditions further exacerbate the issue. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities create frustration and desperation among youth, making illegal activities appear as viable alternatives. Psychological factors such as low self-esteem, trauma, and mental health disorders also contribute significantly to delinquent behaviour.

In the digital age, exposure to violent media, cyber environments, and unregulated online spaces has

introduced new forms of delinquency. Therefore, addressing juvenile delinquency requires a multi-dimensional approach that integrates legal frameworks, social support systems, and rehabilitative interventions.

II. CONCEPT AND EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The concept of juvenile delinquency has evolved significantly over time. In earlier centuries, children who committed crimes were treated as miniature adults and subjected to the same harsh punishments. However, with the advent of modern social reform movements in the 18th and 19th centuries, a shift in perspective began to emerge. Reformers argued that children required guidance and protection rather than punishment.

A landmark development occurred in 1899 with the establishment of the first juvenile court in Chicago, which emphasized rehabilitation over retribution. This model influenced juvenile justice systems worldwide. In India, legislative developments such as the Children Act of 1960 and the Juvenile Justice Act of 1986 marked the beginning of a structured approach toward juvenile justice.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, and its subsequent amendment in 2015, further strengthened the framework by incorporating child rights principles aligned with international standards. The modern concept of juvenile delinquency recognizes that children in conflict with the law are victims of circumstances rather than perpetrators of intentional crime.

Today, juvenile delinquency is understood as a socio-legal issue influenced by environmental, psychological, and structural factors. The emphasis has shifted from punishment to rehabilitation, reintegration, and protection of child rights. This evolution reflects a broader societal commitment to nurturing children and addressing the root causes of delinquent behaviour.

III. JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN INDIA

The Juvenile Justice System in India operates under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which provides a comprehensive legal framework for dealing with children in conflict with

the law. The system is rooted in the principles of child rights, rehabilitation, and social reintegration.

Key institutions under this system include the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) and the Child Welfare Committee (CWC). The JJB handles cases involving juvenile offenders and ensures that proceedings are conducted in a child-friendly manner. The CWC addresses issues related to children in need of care and protection, such as those who are abandoned, abused, or neglected.

Observation Homes and Special Homes play a crucial role in the rehabilitation process. Observation Homes provide temporary shelter during inquiry, while Special Homes offer long-term rehabilitation through education, counselling, and vocational training. Adoption agencies, regulated by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), facilitate legal adoption processes for vulnerable children.

A significant feature of the 2015 Act is the provision allowing juveniles aged 16–18 to be tried as adults for heinous crimes, subject to assessment by the JJB. While this provision has been debated, the overarching focus of the system remains rehabilitative.

Despite its progressive framework, the system faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, shortage of trained personnel, and social stigma. Effective implementation requires coordinated efforts among legal authorities, social workers, and communities.

IV. JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu implements the national Juvenile Justice framework through state-specific institutions and programs. The state has established Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, Observation Homes, and Special Homes to address the needs of juveniles.

The Department of Social Defence oversees the functioning of these institutions, ensuring that children receive proper care, counselling, and rehabilitation. Observation Homes in Tamil Nadu serve as critical spaces where juveniles are provided with basic amenities and psychological support during the inquiry process.

The state emphasizes educational and vocational training programs aimed at reintegrating juveniles into society. Adoption agencies and foster care programs are also actively promoted to provide stable family environments for vulnerable children.

However, challenges persist, including overcrowding in institutions, limited resources, and the need for improved staff training. Strengthening community-based rehabilitation and increasing awareness about child rights are essential for enhancing the effectiveness of the system.

V. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Juvenile delinquency is influenced by a wide range of factors that operate at individual, familial, and societal levels. Individual factors include impulsivity, low self-control, and mental health issues. Substance abuse and emotional trauma further increase vulnerability to delinquent behaviour.

Family-related factors are among the most significant contributors. Broken homes, domestic violence, neglect, and lack of parental supervision create unstable environments that foster delinquency. Parenting styles, whether overly strict or permissive, also impact a child's behaviour.

Peer influence plays a critical role during adolescence. Association with delinquent peers often leads to the adoption of risky behaviours. The desire for acceptance and identity drives juveniles toward group conformity.

Socio-economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality create stress and frustration, pushing juveniles toward illegal activities. Educational factors, including academic failure and school dropout, further contribute to delinquency.

Environmental influences such as exposure to violence, media content, and lack of community support systems exacerbate the problem. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective prevention strategies.

VI. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Various theories attempt to explain juvenile delinquency from different perspectives. Biological theories emphasize genetic and physiological factors influencing behaviour. Psychological theories focus on personality traits, emotional development, and mental health.

Social learning theory suggests that delinquency is learned through observation and imitation of others.

Differential association theory highlights the role of social interactions in shaping criminal behaviour. Strain theory explains delinquency as a response to frustration arising from unmet social expectations.

Labelling theory examines how societal reactions and stigmatization contribute to continued delinquency. Control theory emphasizes the importance of social bonds in preventing deviant behaviour.

These theories collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of juvenile delinquency, highlighting the need for multi-dimensional interventions.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to explore juvenile delinquency in Coimbatore district. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of juveniles.

Data is collected from juveniles in observation homes using semi-structured interviews. The sample represents diverse socio-economic backgrounds, providing a comprehensive view of the issue. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns and themes in the data.

The methodology ensures reliability and validity through systematic data collection and analysis. However, limitations such as small sample size and regional focus are acknowledged.

VIII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing literature highlights juvenile delinquency as a global issue influenced by socio-economic and psychological factors. International studies emphasize the role of peer influence, family structure, and social environment.

National studies in India focus on the impact of poverty, education, and legal frameworks. Regional studies highlight the importance of localized analysis and institutional effectiveness.

The literature underscores the need for preventive strategies, rehabilitation programs, and policy interventions.

IX. CONCLUSION

Juvenile delinquency is a complex and multifaceted issue that reflects broader social, economic, and

psychological challenges. Addressing this problem requires a holistic approach that integrates legal frameworks, social support systems, and community involvement.

The Juvenile Justice System in India provides a strong foundation for rehabilitation and reintegration. However, effective implementation remains a challenge due to infrastructural and societal constraints. Strengthening institutions, improving access to education, and promoting mental health support are crucial steps.

Preventive strategies should focus on early intervention, family support, and community engagement. Educational institutions must play a proactive role in guiding youth and preventing delinquent behaviour.

Ultimately, juveniles should be viewed not as criminals but as individuals in need of care, guidance, and opportunities. A compassionate and reformative approach is essential for building a just and inclusive society.

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