

REVIEW ON CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Greesha Yadav

Queen Mary's School Northend, Model Town

DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2021.v06i08.033 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2021.v06i08.033>

ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency has been a part of our society for a long time. Juvenile delinquency is when a child under the age of 18 years commits a crime or engages in an illegal activity. The number of delinquents is constantly increasing in India along with the rest of the world. These delinquents are the ones that have a high chance of becoming an offender or a serious and violent criminal as an adult. These activities not only affect the individuals and their families but also the society as a whole. Hence, it is important to understand the many factors contributing to a child becoming a delinquent; these factors have been classified into four categories: social factors, individual factors, family background, and economic factors. A study was also conducted in which 26 respondents were taken through a semi-structured questionnaire. They were asked various questions about their views on juvenile delinquency and its perpetuating factors; we will talk more in-depth about the findings made from this study.

In this paper, we aim at understanding the delinquents, their perpetuating factors, and what measures can be taken by a community to prevent and rehabilitate these children.

Keywords: Juvenile, Delinquency, Crime, Risk factor, Protective factor, Community, Society, Family.

Research Questions:

1. Who are juvenile delinquents, and what are the risk factors of becoming a delinquent?
2. What preventive, as well as, rehabilitative measures can be taken by a community?

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency constantly keeps on increasing in the world; India, being a country with such a large population, thus also has a large number of children who are vulnerable, and get

stuck in the trap and become food to the fish, that is crime. According to The Indian Express (2019), the data from National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB) shows that in 2017 there were over 40,000 juvenile delinquents reported in the country. A juvenile is a person who is under the age of 18 years. Delinquency is any act that is not approved by law, in other words, delinquency is an illegal or criminal activity. Juvenile Delinquency is an act of crime or an act that disturbs the peace of the nation or society, conducted by a person who is under 18 years of age. Some of these acts include- theft, street hawking, black marketing, murder, gambling, sexual crimes, and many more.

These children become a threat to their family, society, and even themselves; to ensure a secure society, it is necessary to understand what causes them to behave in these particular ways. In this paper, we aim at understanding the psychological reasons along with the social, familial, or economic factors that contribute to these delinquencies. Risk factors are the variables or characteristics that are present in an individual's life that increase the possibility of him/her becoming an offender; some of these factors include: IQ levels, peer groups, school environment, number of siblings, adolescent phase of life, quality of parenting, etc. Besides this, some protective factors may be present in a person's life that act like some resistance between the risk factors and the actual act of delinquency. Protective factors are those factors that moderate the effect of exposure to risk factors, therefore, reducing the risk of undesired behaviour. A protective factor can be anything that can negate the effect of the risk factors, even a little bit.

Apart from the risk and protective factors, it is also crucial to understand the role that the community can play in the prevention of juvenile delinquencies and the rehabilitation of a delinquent. The use of prevention techniques can play a vital role in lowering the growing number of juvenile delinquents; in these techniques, we try to dismiss the role of a risk factor or completely change a risk factor in an individual's life. There are rehabilitation programs available for children who have already been declared a delinquent. Psychologists and counselors play a vital role in controlling or minimizing the number of children exposed to the risk factors in a society or community.

Methodology

All the information presented in this paper is secondary data collected from various sources. A study was conducted in Shilong, Meghalaya, on 26 respondents on the topic "the causes of juvenile crimes and prevention by the community". Out of the 26 respondents, 18 responded and out of the 18, 7 were teachers and 11 were from the police department, both males and females. The researcher distributed questionnaires among the respondents through Whatsapp and emails, which contained various questions about the respondents' questions on the topic. The qualitative

data gathered was analyzed by the researcher using thematic analysis. The findings obtained from the study are listed later in the paper.

Risk Factors of Juvenile Delinquency

Risk factors are the factors in an individual's life that make him/her more vulnerable to a certain event. The risk factors that are involved in becoming a juvenile delinquent are classified into four categories: Social factors, Individual factors, Economic factors, and Family background. Risk factors are necessary to be understood along with the stage of the development years the risk factors emerged. This helps in preparing for programs that help in reducing delinquent behaviour in a cost and time-effective manner.

Family Background

The children that have issues in their family are more likely to indulge in activities that are not socially acceptable and deviate from the social and legal norms. The separation of parents, an abusive parent, parental conflicts on a daily basis, affect the child's mental health adversely. Other than this, low or poor quality of parenting, the child not having a good relationship with the parents, poor parental supervision on the child, the parents' disregarding behaviour towards the child, a large number of children in the family, all are important factors that often lead the child to feel some sort of inferiority or feeling unloved or feeling neglected that leads him/her to get involved in illegal activities outside his/her house. If the child has parents that don't follow the law properly or are not vigilant towards the laws of the country, then the child is more likely to also not care about abiding by the laws him/herself.

Social Factors

The community, the society, and the environment one lives in is a major factor in the way to becoming a delinquent. Poor school environment of a child, experiences of bullying, bad influence of social media, being in bad or poor company, are some of the social risk factors that might lead a child to become a juvenile delinquent. All of these factors along with involvement in delinquent peer groups or memberships in gangs might lead the child to start substance consumption. Substances like drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, are often consumed by these children. This substance abuse leads to them indulging in certain illegal activities so that they can gain more money in order to buy more of those substances for their consumption. This cycle continues, and thus, the children are declared juvenile delinquents.

Economic Factors

It has been observed that a lot of the juvenile delinquencies that are reported are committed by

children belonging to poor or economically behind families. Economic conditions are a major factor contributing to the increasing number of delinquents. These children are often enticed to perform an illegal activity such as theft, in order to fulfill their basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing; they steal money and then, they are in a position to fulfill these needs. These activities are also often rooted in the enviousness of a luxurious and rich lifestyle. The poverty-stricken give birth to more children who are also stuck with the poverty-stricken life, and hence, like this, more delinquents form, in order to fulfill their basic needs.

Individual Factors

Children who are hostile, antisocial, apathetic, often in need of instant gratification, aggressive, impulsive, etc. are more likely to become juvenile delinquents. Furthermore, poor performance in school, low grades, and low commitment to school and studies are also vital risk factors. Children with low IQ(Intelligence Quotient) who don't receive proper nurturing, often tend to get involved in these illegal actions. Low IQ or Intellectual Deficiency is described as “ significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period ” by The American Association on Mental Deficiency (AAMD). Therefore, individuals that have adaptation issues and have an IQ below 70, all of this have been observed during the developmental period of life (0-18 years), have an intellectual deficiency.

The adolescent period of life also is a major factor here. Adolescents go through a huge number of physical as well as mental or psychological changes. This is a phase of emotional instability, wherein, new emotions emerge and an individual is confused and unsure of his/her feelings and emotions; at this time feeling of inferiority, neglection, jealousy, resentment, insecurities, etc. come up and thus, lead them to perform activities that are illegal and unethical. It has been observed that a large number of juvenile delinquents that are reported are adolescents.

Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency

After understanding the risk factors involved in becoming a juvenile delinquent, and identifying at what age the delinquent behaviour began, it is necessary to understand how these behaviours can be prevented and minimized. There are certain interventions that can be done by the community to prevent such behaviour in children; it is believed that these interventions should be done right from the start, in order to avoid any criminal activity altogether. There are two types of prevention programs.

Individual Program

In these programs, delinquency prevention is done through counseling, psychotherapy, and

community education. The psychologists and counselors help in identifying early or pre-delinquents and help the children to understand their own personalities, removing their insecurities, feelings of inferiority and jealousy, etc.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping one's life. It is important to provide proper education to the children on topics like substance abuse, mental health issues, bullying(including cyberbullying) and methods to cope up with it, the influence of social media, and so on. The parents should be educated about how to improve their relationships with their children, how to maintain a nurturing home environment, and how to raise healthy and fit (both mentally and physically) children. Along with the education, it is also really important for the teachers to be sensitive and empathetic towards a child; to treat a student as their own child and help them in all ways, instead of just being an authoritative figure in the student's life.

The individual program also aims to provide recreational programs. These recreational programs provide a place for the children to mingle with other children and adults, and to make new friends. Similarly, youth programs are made that involve various fun activities such as rock climbing, dancing, drama, karate, art, etc. that are such, that they fit the personalities and interests of the individuals. Such programs, let the children channel their energies to a different place and distract them from indulging in delinquent activities.

Environmental Program

In these programs, delinquency prevention is done by changing the social, economic conditions, and other factors that might be contributing to the delinquencies.

It is viewed that active participation of the community can majorly help in the prevention of delinquencies. Local communities can take part in changing the conditions of the neighborhood and bring reforms in the socially adverse environment. Parental love and affection should be promoted by the community; love and affection instill positive feelings in the children and really help in reducing the probability of occurrence of delinquent activity.

Alongside, clear and correct publicity of the number of juvenile delinquencies, its causes, and prevention, in newspapers, magazines, radios, televisions, etc., help the community members to understand the various aspects of juvenile delinquency. Thus, they might help in the reduction or change of the risk factors that lead juveniles to get involved in crimes.

Findings

The findings of the first part of the study conducted, i.e. *what are the causes of juvenile*

delinquency, are as follows:

- Most of the respondents pointed out that being in a bad company of friends or peer pressure is the major cause of juvenile delinquency.
- Some of the respondents view that some adolescents tend to turn into juvenile delinquents when they are unable to cater to their needs and wants.
- Most respondents pinpoint poverty or financial instability as one of the causes of juvenile delinquency.
- Many respondents view that parental skills and family background play an important part in becoming a delinquent.
- The respondents mention that the discrimination present in the society leads a child to delinquency.
- Many respondents viewed school as a major risk factor. It is the factor that can either be the stop to or the cause of juvenile delinquency.
- It was found out that most of the respondents did not view parental divorce or separation as a major factor of juvenile delinquency, while earlier studies have shown the contrary.
- Most respondents have said that social media plays a major role in leading children to commit criminal activities.

The findings from the second part of the study, i.e. *how to prevent juvenile delinquency*, are as follows:

- Many respondents viewed that educational institutions play an important role in the prevention of delinquencies, and should organize various programs to educate the children on important issues.
- Many respondents have also said that teachers have a vital role in molding students' lives, and thus can have a crucial role in preventing delinquency.
- Many respondents thought that community is a major factor contributing to juvenile delinquencies. They viewed that community programs are necessary to provide psychological aid to the children and their families and help in the prevention of juvenile delinquencies.

- Many respondents viewed that counselors and psychologists play a very important role in the prevention of delinquencies.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that juvenile delinquencies are an inescapable factor that lowers the standard of a community or society; they can't be fully diminished from society, but can be controlled and prevented. A community should focus on the risk factors of juvenile delinquency and how they can be avoided or prevented. The various prevention programs available should be opted to do so. These programs can change or improve the social, economic, or familial factors behind delinquencies; and the presence of psychologists and counselors in a child's life help bring out a positive side of life and instill positive thoughts, and thus steer the children away from engaging in any unethical and illegal activities as a medium of seeking comfort. It should be kept in mind that the juvenile delinquents here, are not the suspects or the wrong-doers, instead, they are the victims. Treating them as a culprit, and punishing and scolding them will only result in more resentment from them, which might lead to more criminal activities. It is important that we as a community try to understand them and their issues and then, plan to rehabilitate them.

A nurturing home environment, a fulfilling school environment, a cordial neighborhood and community, can really instill confidence and courage in the children as they grow up, and hence, keep them away from deviating from socially and legally acceptable behaviour.

References

Anniesha Lyngdoh and Riyaka Surong. (2020, October-December). A study on the causes of juvenile delinquency and its prevention by the community. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*.

<https://ijip.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/18.01.138.20200804.pdf>

Asli Yayak, Burcu Türk and Nurcan Hamzaoglu. (2019, January). A psycho-social investigation on the causes of juvenile delinquency. *ResearchGate*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339447139_A_PSYCHO-SOCIAL_INVESTIGATION_ON_THE_CAUSES_OF_JUVENILE_DELINQUENCY

Kiran Phogat. (2017, April). Juvenile Delinquency in India Causes and Prevention. *Ignited Minds Journals* (Vol:13, Issue:1, Pages:625-629).

<http://ignited.in/a/57753>

Michael Shader. (n.d). Risk Factors for Delinquency: An Overview. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/frd030127.pdf>

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention. (n.d). We Are Impact Law.

<https://www.impactlaw.com/criminal-law/juvenile/prevention>