
SOCIETAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCE ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency is an escalating concern influenced by a multifaceted combination of societal and psychological components. This paper analyzes how family dynamics, peer influence, economic conditions and media consumption impact, adolescent behavior, potentially steering some youth towards criminal activities. Psychological aspects, such as childhood trauma, lack of emotional support and mental health issues also play a crucial role in fostering delinquent conduct. Social learning theory suggests that children often replicate observed behaviors reflecting the crucial role of parental guidance and community involvement in preventing delinquency. Additionally, financial hardships and exposure to violence can cultivate aggressive or antisocial behaviors among young people. This paper reviews current literature to identify underlying causes and suggests preventive measures, including rehabilitation programs, therapeutic interventions and improved community support. By tackling both social and psychological aspects, this research emphasizes the importance of early intervention in decreasing youth crime rates.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency, Societal influence, Psychological-factors, Family dynamics, Peer pressure, Mental health, Early intervention, Rehabilitation programs.

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency includes involvement of minors in illegal activities which violates the existing laws. The term Juvenile delinquency is also referred to as Juvenile offending” and each Country has their own separate legal framework in order to deal with minor who breaks the law. If we see in Indian context, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 defines Juvenile Delinquent as a child in conflict with law who has not attained the age of 18 years and has allegedly committed an offence. This Act distinguishes young offender from adult criminals acknowledging their developmental stage and the higher potential for their rehabilitation.

The term “delinquency” is taken from the Latin word “delinquer” meaning “omit”. Juvenile delinquency refers to behavior which is not approved of by children or teenagers wherein they tend to show criminal behavior. In simple words, it means deviance from the norms and laws which are accepted in society, where young people usually take part in anti-social activities.

The problem of juvenile delinquency has emerged as a growing problem in India and elsewhere in the world. Societal and Psychological influence should be studied and understood to see the root cause of the juvenile delinquency and to adopt an effective preventive measure and strengthen legal framework. Examples of societal facts are family dynamics that include parental neglect, and abuse, single parent homes, family criminal background, peer pressures, economic conditions such as poverty, educational disparities, and lack of opportunity, media influences such as violent television programs, violent video games, on online social media, and cyber bullying, and exposure to violence, which can play a significant role in juvenile delinquency. Simultaneously, one of the psychological factors influencing children’s activities is childhood trauma and abuse, namely physical abuse, emotional and sexual abuse, mental state like depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, ADHD and, conduct disorder, and the lack of emotional support and guidance as the absence of positive examples to follow.

Societal influence on Juvenile Delinquency

1. Family dynamics

Family plays an important role in shaping the mind of children. Juvenile delinquent behavior is the mirror image of the family circumstances. In other words, children’s actions are often

linked to the conditions and values of their household but if a child experiences parental neglect and abuse which leads to poor parenting may contribute to their involvement in delinquent behavior. Family dynamics or circumstances include parental neglect and abuse, single -parent households and family criminal background. Parental neglect and abuse can push children toward juvenile delinquency. When kids lack love, care, and guidance, they may feel unwanted, leading to anger and frustration. Neglect leaves them unsupervised, making them easy targets for bad influences like gangs and crime. Abuse creates deep emotional pain, causing aggression, mistrust, and rebellion. Many turn to crime as an escape or a way to express their hurt. Without positive role models, they struggle with discipline and choices. Feeling abandoned, they seek acceptance in the wrong places. In the absence of support, delinquency becomes a way to survive or be noticed.

a) Parental neglect and abuse

Mennen FE, Kim K, Sang J, and Trickett PK define parental neglect as when parents or other primary caregivers consistently disregard a child's basic needs, including a safe environment, enough food, education, health care, and emotional support. Intriguingly parental neglect can occur without any physical or emotional abuse and is more often characterized by the caregiver's passivity. Parental negligence is one of the major factors influencing children to delinquent behavior. One of the main causes of juvenile delinquency may be broken homes.¹ Children with parents who do not respect the law or societal norms are likely to develop delinquent behavior. Children having parents who are likely to be busy most of the time leaving children unattended for longer period of time are allowed to roam freely without the fear of parents. Lack of parental supervision may be more likely to indulge in illegal activities. The children that are not even disciplined and do not know the consequences of delinquent behavior may contribute to the juvenile delinquents. The other potential risk is when some children that had not seen the frequent consequences of misbehavior may not appreciate the severity of their actions. Also, if the children are not praised for their good behavior or positive reinforcements for good behavior then, there are chances of juvenile delinquency. When children feel being ignored or less important because of lack of positive reinforcement in good behavior, they may act out in an attempt to attract attention or approval. The neglect and abuse by parents may drive children towards juvenile delinquency. Complaints by children whereby they feel they

¹ S.J. Bosick & P. Fomby, Family Instability in Childhood and Criminal Offending During the Transition into Adulthood, 62 *Am. Behav. Sci.* 1483 (2018).

are unwanted may be caused by absence of love, care and guidance. Neglect makes them an easy prey of bad influence such as gangs and crime. Abuse leads to severe emotional pain propagating aggression, distrust, and rebellion. Most of them resort to crime as a way of running away or to release the hurt. With no positive role models, they find difficulty in discipline and choices. Feeling abandoned, they look for the acceptance in the wrong places. In lack of it delinquency becomes a way of surviving or attracting attention.

b) Single-parented households

The whole family understands that even though they have some common goals, they all try to accomplish them in their areas of responsibility. Having a broken home where there are discords and quarrels and where child is used as the mediator between parents too causes juvenile delinquency. Children from single parent families are in a greater risk of committing a juvenile delinquency as the children encounter several difficulties from time to time. In most cases a single parent is forced to work long hours to support the family thus leaving no much supervision for the child. If no attention is given to children, they might seek company in the wrong environments like peer group engrossed in delinquent activities. Aside from that, when it comes to single-parent households, lack of money may cause stress resulting in there being no resources for education, extra curriculum or mental health support. Other children may also suffer from emotional stress caused by lack of one parent that may lead to anger, frustration or low self-esteem. The absence of a good parental model might make them weak in discipline and decision-making. Not all children that grow up in such families will delinquent but lack of supervision, financial constraints and emotional issues increase the possibility of doing something risky or criminal.

c) Family criminal background

Strong influence on the occurrence of a child becoming delinquent can be seen in a criminal background of a family. When a child grows up watching crime being the norm, it is likely that he or she believes it to be normal. Parents/relatives who are engaged in illegal activities are unable to guide the children properly thus children do not have role models. Instead of learning responsibility and discipline, they may choose to imitate the same behaviors that they see at home. In many ways, these kids have unsteadfast family situations and environment, with violence, substance abuse or various legal problems. This instability will cause emotional stress and thus they become more likely to look for comfort in gangs or peer groups that are immersed

in crime. Also, it is assumed that if a kid sees that his family members escape punishment or manage to gain by crime, he will be likely to follow the same path. Without proper intervention in the forms of support or alternative models without their strong intervention they are more prone to be involved in delinquent behavior.

2. Peer Influence

Another great contributor to juvenile delinquency is Peer influence. Children are very vulnerable to influences from their peers since the type of behaviors and attitudes adopted by their peers will be imitated, thus they indulge in criminal activities. Peer Pressure has many times compelled the kids and teens to do the same that their friends are doing even against their will. Children and teenagers can imitate their peers consequently to peer pressure even disregarding what they desire. For example, if a child's friends display undesirable behavior, such a child may be forced to emulate the same so as to earn acceptance from these friends. Moreover, rejection by the peers can also lead to the undesirable behavior. Kids who experience exclusion or rejection from their peers might resort to misbehavior to gain attention or acceptance from them.

3. Economic Conditions

a) Poverty

Poverty is another factor which contributes to juvenile delinquency. Children who live in poverty are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior as they lack necessary resources to lead their livelihood. Poverty can lead to lack of education, poor nutrition, and lack of access to health care, which can all contribute to delinquent behavior. Descriptions of crime and poverty are often dependent on each other. Besides, the majority of them are relatives of unskilled laborers. All these situate lower family income as a major setback for both the children who share the burden of poverty and neglect their education. There are a few studies that reveal young people in jobs were more likely to be involved in crime than those who were jobless. Beyond that, poor people's children, who are in informal settlements, fulfill each of the numerous desires and it is only to make money that they resort to crime. The feeling of unsatisfaction and inferiority that poverty also creates is another cause of crime.

The social, psychological, and economic causes of Juvenile delinquency are so thoroughly

explored and explained to the point that the principle of specific causation does not quite suit this phenomenon. On the other hand, all criminologist and psychologists will agree on the many possible causes of crime that exist. The people's kinds of activities are connected with their ways of adapting to the environment. The modified individuals using antisocial behavior are stigmatized as criminals while those employing socially acceptable methods are termed healthy. Therefore, should be seen as interplay of several factors like social familiar, individual, psychological and economic causes. Hence, to enable successful rehabilitation of the Juvenile and to enslave him/her as a good member of society, we all require to- flashing to our knowledge all the above-discussed bullying causes as well as erase them. Considering the raised tuff question, we are confronted with a painful necessity to face the fact that the phenomenon is no longer an exclusively third-world-country problem. The consequence of this is the fact that most modern Juvenile delinquents can no longer be cured everywhere or at least are not treated as this should be. ²

b) Educational Disparities and lack of opportunities

Children who are deprived of learning due to the lack of or limited availability of education are more likely to commit delinquent acts. Students experiencing learning problems might find the situation meaningless and this could lead to truancy. This could finally result in the students dropping out of school, so the number of cases at that school will increase. Education is a window for the kids which supplies both the necessary wisdom and the required skill to the children and gives chances of better decision making to them. Besides this, their low self-esteem and fewer opportunities might be related to their deviation from good behaviors. They cannot get an education of quality, and this makes them lack the ability and opportunity to succeed in their life. It may result in them feeling frustrated or hopeless, which may lead to misbehavior. Children who do not go to school and receive no education are also more open to several negative aspects, such as having deviant peers or coming into contact with adults who participate in criminal activities. Additionally, education of low quality may not be the only issue faced by the children who need help to succeed in life. They also might face not getting enough parent, teacher, and community old people's support which can bring about feelings of

² Vaishali C. Achakanalli & S.I. Kumbhar, Socio-Economic Factors Responsible for Increasing Juvenile Delinquency and Various Rehabilitative Measures of Government, *6 Scholarly Res. J. Human. Sci. & Eng'g Lang.* 30 (2018).

being isolated and disconnected.³

4. Media Influence

Modern human life now depends fundamentally on mass media platforms which include newspapers, films, comics, radio, television and internet websites. Mass media platforms control how people think about everything while at the same time they manipulate interpersonal conduct and fashion cultural conventions. Mass media holds an unmatched global power today which enables the instant sharing of information together with entertainment and various beliefs worldwide.⁴ The wide availability of smartphones together with digital platforms enables marginalized communities to obtain different types of media content. Media functions as a teaching medium for awareness yet offers dangerous potential negative effects to impressionable youth and children because they lack proper critical thinking skills to separate fact from fiction.⁵ Visual media specifically such as television along with movie content demonstrate significant effects on youth development of attitudes and behaviors. Various research has shown how films with violent content alongside substance abuse or pornography directly affect the emotional states of teenagers. Young viewers who watch such violent entertainment usually become less sensitive to aggressive behavior and immoral conduct which leads them to reflect these actions in their daily lives.⁶ Public exposure to pornography has proven to cause people to develop warped ideas about sexual relationships as well as display aggressive behavior and lower their empathy towards victims of rape. Media has the power to educate and amuse people but its lack of rules during consumption may create societal negative outcomes which teenagers experience most severely.⁷ The educational system needs media literacy programs and home supervision programs because children must learn critical thinking and ethical values when they interact with mass media.

³ Jiaqi Dong, Analysis of Economic Factors in Juvenile Delinquency, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Social Psychology and Humanities Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/10/20230394> (2023).

⁴ D. McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (6th ed. 2010).

⁵ Victor C. Strasburger, Amy B. Jordan & Ed Donnerstein, Health Effects of Media on Children and Adolescents, *125 Pediatrics* 756 (2010).

⁶ Elizabeth W. Owens et al., The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research, *19 Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 99 (2012).

⁷ David Buckingham, *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2003).

Psychological factors contributing to Juvenile Delinquency

1. Mental Health Issues

Juvenile delinquency manifests as foremost from various mental health disorders that affect adolescents. Multiple scientific research demonstrates a direct correlation between youth psychiatric disorders and criminal tendencies.⁸ Adolescents younger people that have CD (Conduct Disorder), ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder), ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), depression and anxiety are more likely to engage in antisocial activities than other adolescents. The conditions present challenges in emotional restriction but disrupt both cognitive decisions and other interactions thus, increasing youth vulnerability to aggressive acts; and rule breaking with impulses.

The conduct disorder (CD) identifies itself through repeated continuing behavior that never ceases infringing on the rights of others and the existing social rules. Youthful behavior, which is quite common for people affected by CD, includes aggressive acts and deceitful practices coupled with intentional destruction. Young people engage in physical combat fights, thievery, among other activities, and they engage in activities of vandalism when committing violence. This behavior interferes with the academic and social development while at the same time being an indication of the onset of a criminal trend in the life of a child. By its own right, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) exists as a weaker version of CD but provokes frequent temper tantrums and reluctance to obey and hostile behavior, which may morph into severe behavioral issues before being addressed, if conditions are ignored. The symptoms of ADHD are directly linked to juvenile delinquency as the patients tend to demonstrate such three major components of impulsiveness impotence with inattention and hyperactivity. Youths diagnosed with ADHD normally find it hard to follow the rules and observe routines, and hence they end up acting without minding the consequences.⁹ Majority of the youths who end up in the justice system have diagnosable disorders of the mind yet they seldom get proper identification and treatment. Availing inadequate support makes children in justice system contact to have poor academic performance and deteriorated relationships and increased returns to the justice

⁸ Thomas Grisso, *Double Jeopardy: Adolescent Offenders with Mental Disorders* 5–10 (2004).

⁹ Russell A. Barkley, *Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment* 264–280 (4th ed. 2015).

system.¹⁰

2. Childhood Trauma and Abuse

Childhood traumas and cases of abuse are cardinal danger factors that cause juvenile delinquency. It is the combination of physical violence, sexual assault, emotional mistreatment and witnessing domestic abuse that brings with it permanent psycho-emotional effects in children.¹¹ Children who experience any type of physical abuse or sexual abuse alongside emotional neglect and parental substance abuse exposure or being required to witness domestic violence develop significant impairments toward their safety and trust and personal value.¹² The first traumatic experiences of childhood actively influence how the brain develops specific areas that control stress responses and make decisions while forming empathy skills. Childhood trauma established through the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study has strong correlations which predict behavioral problems and substance abuse and criminal conduct in coming youth and adult periods. Victims of abuse tend to develop psychological beliefs that they are wrong and worthless among other negatively charged emotions. People who do not address such emotions tend to express their pain by becoming aggressive bullies or thieves or violent individuals. Delinquency functions as both a defensive approach and a wrongheaded means to regain control over an environment which previously left the affected person feeling powerless. A child who watches domestic violence may develop a normal perception of conflict resolution through violence or establishing dominance over others.¹³ Children who endure sexual abuse will display sexual misconduct and criminal behavior as methods to handle their psychological problems.

Theoretical Framework

1. Social Learning Theory

It was developed on the theory which says that a lot of learning comes from our interactions

¹⁰ Nat'l Ctr. for Mental Health & Juvenile Justice, *Juvenile Justice and Mental Health Systems: An Overview* (2006).

¹¹ David Finkelhor & Karen A. Kendall-Tackett, *A Developmental Perspective on the Childhood Impact of Crime, Abuse, and Violent Victimization* (1997).

¹² Martin H. Teicher & Jacqueline A. Samson, Annual Research Review: Enduring Neurobiological Effects of Childhood Abuse and Neglect, *57 J. Child Psychol. & Psychiatry* 241 (2016).

¹³ David Finkelhor et al., *The Victimization of Children and Youth: A Comprehensive, National Survey*, *10 Child Maltreatment* 5 (2005).

with other individuals in a social context.¹⁴ Social learning theory contends that people learn from one another through:

- a. Observation
- b. Imitation, and
- c. Modeling.¹⁵

The way people influence and copy others' behavior in response to what they had just seen, especially in the case of their observational experiences being favorable or that they will be rewarded to remain the same way.¹⁶ Bandura emphasizes the fact that imitation necessitates a lifelike performance of the motor operations observed.¹⁷ First, and second lessons in social learning were identification and development of behavior. What will happen is that if a person sees that the first step is the one that leads to the favorable result that they desire, modeling will follow. Modeling will come next if someone perhaps a child sees a role model and a good result because of the first step.¹⁸ Importance of Social Learning Theory in Juvenile Delinquency is increasing. Kids are looking at their parents, seniors, brothers, kith, and kin, and neighbors, and then they imitate the way they interact with certain situations. When the children are given the opportunity of practicing Observing and Imitating, their behavior becomes more and more different, and their actions express the differences in the surroundings.

2. Strain Theory

The strain theory explains why Delinquency might happen when people cannot achieve what they want via lawful ways. In such cases, people might commit crimes to reach their ends or vent their frustration by harassing the subject of their dissatisfaction.¹⁹ An interesting thought hence it is expected that stress theory has had a marked effect on delinquency research and

¹⁴ R.T. Nabavi, *Theories of Developmental Psychology: Bandura's Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning Theory*, ResearchGate (Jan. 2012), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267750204_Theories_of_Developmental_Psychology_Bandura's_Social_Learning_Theory_and_Social_Cognitive_Learning_Theory.

¹⁵ *Id*

¹⁶ *Id*

¹⁷ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (1977).

¹⁸ R.T. Nabavi, *Theories of Developmental Psychology: Bandura's Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning Theory*, ResearchGate, Jan. 2012, at 1..

¹⁹ T.O. Ireland, Strain Theory, in *Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment* (2012), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950664.n418>.

public policy. All strain theories implicitly suggest that only a minority of strained individuals turn to crime. Emile Durkheim was the first to develop a modern theory of crime and deviance. Nevertheless, during the mid-twentieth century, Merton's classic strain theory and its follow-ups were the hegemonic paradigm in criminology. According to the original strain theory, the stress that revolves around the difficulty of getting a financial breakthrough or the more general target of attaining a middle-class position is the basic element. One cannot but be surprised to see the fact that when the discoveries of the 1970s and 1980s did not coincide with the conventional strain theory, it was set aside.²⁰ Nevertheless, the latest research has been even harsher in its tone on the topic of strain theory, instead of sticking to only modest proof. This has been the cause of disarray in the ranks of a number of researchers who demand either the annulment of the idea of strain or its amendment (Elliott et al.; Hirschi, Kornhauser).²¹ General Strain Theory was so Robert Agnew's term in 1992, and to this day it is the major version of strain theory and, at the same time, one of the major ones as well among them in the case of crime. One of the general strain theory perspectives is on the wide-Ranging strains including the ones that are to be blamed for the inefficiency of an individual to achieve the necessary goals, the loss of Important items, and the mishandling of individuals by others.²² The general strain theory is considered a framework used to explain differences in crime rates as a result of gender, race and ethnicity, age, social structure, and community. Moreover, it has also been utilized as a tool to study issues of corporate communications, police abuses, harassment, cyberbullying, suicidal tendencies, terrorism, and eating disorder, among other activities.²³

3. Labeling Theory

Labeling theory is a sociological aspect of crime and deviance that talks about the process of social labeling. The concept is that, on the one hand, deviant behavior can be explained by a range of factors and conditions, and, on the other hand, once those people are labelled or described as deviants, they get to face new difficulties because of the reactions of society and themselves to the negative stereotypes (stigma) attached to the deviant label.²⁴ Those issues

²⁰ Robert Agnew, A Revised Strain Theory of Delinquency, 64 *Soc. Forces* 151 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/64.1.151>.

²¹ T.O. Ireland, Strain Theory, in *Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment* (2012), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950664.n418>.

²² Robert Agnew, A Revised Strain Theory of Delinquency, 64 *Soc. Forces* 151 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/64.1.151>.

²³ Id

²⁴ Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963); Edwin M. Lemert, *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control* (2d ed. 1967).

can increase the probability of the individual continually performing the wrong or illegal acts over a period of time. Lemert (1967) argues that "Deviant behavior" can evolve as a "way of defense, attack, or adaptation" to the situations of labeling of a deviant". The label of criminal offender can thus set in motion the same things that cause continued crime and deviance, irrespective of prelabeling behavior patterns or pre-labeling social and psychological conditions.²⁵ Supporters of this view believed it was a new way to help crime and deviance which had become out of control during the 1960's, however, as critics began to mount this approach's popularity began to decline in the 1970's. Critics contended that the theory of labeling was vague, reductionist and ideological²⁶ and empirical studies had consistently challenged the thesis that labeling produces deviant behavior. Scholars later noted that this critique led to the premature death of labeling theory²⁷. This was because detractors of labeling theory exaggerated and oversimplified what the theory actually claimed.²⁸ In addition, much of the research that failed to support labeling theory was methodologically unsound and thus did not constitute significant testing. Many attempts have been made in the past two decades to enhance the scientific rigor of the research on labeling. Methodological deficiencies related to both the experimental design itself and participants' interpretation of labeling have forced researchers to be as specific and as thorough as possible in explaining how labeling contributes to aberrant behavior²⁹

Consequences of Juvenile Delinquency

1. Legal Consequences

Juvenile Delinquency under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 represents a substantial improvement in Indian juvenile justice practice. The Delhi gang rape events coupled with

²⁵ Jón Gunnar Bernburg, Labeling Theory, in *Handbook on Crime and Deviance* 187 (Marvin D. Krohn et al. eds., Springer 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0245-0>.

²⁶ Travis Hirschi, *Moral Commitment, Attachment to the Group and Delinquency* (1980); Milton Mankoff, *The Myth of a Value-Free Sociology* (1971); Charles R. Tittle, *Sanctions and Social Deviance: The Question of Deterrence* (1980); Charles Wellford, *Labelling Theory and Criminology: An Assessment* (1975).

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Theodore N. Palarma, Francis T. Cullen & Joseph Gersten, The Effect of Police and Mental Health Intervention on Juvenile Deviance: A Study of Runaways, 33 *Crime & Delinq.* 66 (1986); Raymond Paternoster & LeeAnn Iovanni, The Labeling Perspective and Delinquency: An Elaboration of the Theory and an Assessment of the Evidence, 6 *Just. Q.* 359 (1989).

²⁹ Id

public worry about kids who commit serious offenses led to the passing of this Act which created a sophisticated legal model between juvenile justice rehabilitation goals and public security demands. The Act designates a "child in conflict with law" as persons under eighteen years of age who committed an offence while outlining three offense categories as petty offenses, serious offenses and heinous offenses.³⁰ The Act uses this classification to establish the legal framework which determines rehabilitation or punishment procedures. In the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and other related laws, these petty offenses attract the maximum punishment that one may face of up to three years' imprisonment.³¹ The highest punishment for petty offences is three years in jail, serious offences attract three to seven years of imprisonment while heinous offences call for seven years in prison and more. Pressing criminal cases, the legal framework has a three-tiered configuration that offers child-sensitive remedies to criminal cases but also allows reasonable enforcement of law according to the degree of offenses. Preliminary assessment features of Section 15 of the 2015 legislation brought some major changes. In this section the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) has power to conduct assessment of mental and physical capacity of children of 16 to 18 years who are charged with accusations for heinous offenses.³²

Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) Proceedings

The Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) plays the role of the core institution of the juvenile justice system in India according to the Section 4 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.³³ The Board is a quasi-judicial organization that only handles cases involving youths who find themselves against the law since they are below 18 years. The JJB composition consists of a Metropolitan Magistrate/ Judicial Magistrate First Class and two social workers, either of which of them must include a female.³⁴ Judicial proceedings under the JJB implement a child-oriented style of work, which has investigatory form (not ruled out the possibilities of pleading), directed to establishing both responsibility and background reasons for illegal behavior. The Board has come in to ensure congruent intervention in the

³⁰ *The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act*, No. 2 of 2016, Acts of Parliament, 2016 (India).

³¹ Ankur Kumar, Juvenile Justice in India: Legislative and Judicial Developments, 47 *Indian J. Criminology* 56 (2019).

³² V. Singh & M. Rani, Justice for Juveniles: An Analysis of the 2015 JJ Act, 6 *J. Child L. & Pol'y* 89 (2020).

³³ *The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act*, No. 2 of 2016, Acts of Parliament, 2016 (India).

³⁴ Nat'l Comm'n for Protection of Child Rights, *Annual Report* (2020), <https://ncpcr.gov.in/showfile.php?lang=1&level=1&&sublinkid=222&lid=189> (last visited June 12, 2025).

rehabilitation of children as opposed to punishing them because of their doings.³⁵ The proceedings take place in a casual and casual environment that does not allow for formal policing outfits and scary court proceedings. The JJB conducts initial evaluations on children who are between the ages of 16 to 18 years who commit serious offenses to assess their trial eligibility as adults through the physical mental aptitudes and the offense related point of view of the Children's Courts.³⁶ The JJB has the ability to make varying dispositional orders such as committing children in appropriate diverse institutional care and counseling, recommendations and probation services. All the process is based on the principles of natural justice and the application of the interest of children, and the need for proportional responses. Consequently, all these proceedings keep the whole process secret and protect the juvenile's identity for stigma avoidance and positive reintegration.³⁷ The JJB operations note progression into the future because they shift justice emphasis from punitive to rehabilitative goals.

Preventive measures and interventions

1. Family-Based Intervention

Prevention of juvenile delinquency has to begin at home, and among the general populace as most delinquent activities stem from scenarios of neglect, abuse, lack of funds inadequate monitoring and disturbed set up in homes.³⁸ A solution that has been tested to combat juvenile delinquency is use of family-based interventions that transforms families into primary care systems. Juvenile delinquency intervention program integrates parental education with family counseling along with multi-systemic therapy (MST) whereby joint effort between parents and schools and by community agencies is employed. The interventions strive to improve communication while creating boundaries and address dysfunctional behavioral components that are known to contribute towards J.D.³⁹ Works show how supportive are structured families in reducing the likelihood of delinquent behavior especially so for children growing in perilous background situations or in families of substance-abusing parents.

³⁵ R. Singh, Juvenile Justice System in India: Role and Function of Juvenile Justice Board, 5 *J. L. & Pol'y Rev.* 132 (2019).

³⁶ M. Mehta & P. Shukla, Judicial Discretion and Child-Centric Procedures under Juvenile Justice Boards, 12 *Indian J. Legal Stud.* 85 (2021).

³⁷ R. Sharma, The Evolving Jurisprudence of Juvenile Justice in India, 10 *Int'l J. Child. & Youth Just.* 207 (2022).

³⁸ S. Sarkar, *Family-Based Interventions in Juvenile Delinquency: A Systemic Approach* (2020).

³⁹ D. Sharma & R. Kumar, Preventing Juvenile Crime through Family-Centered Approaches: Indian Experiences, 9 *J. Child & Adolescent Behav.* 230 (2021).

2. Rehabilitation and Mental Health Support

Rehabilitation programs can be considered as important components for the juvenile justice system in terms of its contribution to the prevention aspects of crimes and criminal rehabilitation. The educational programs are based on the assumption that young offenders who will have an opportunity to receive proper care will produce moral as well as social advancement.⁴⁰ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 provides that formation of Individual Care Plans (ICPs) is requisite when developing plans for children based on the background and the educational and psychological needs. Various rehabilitation programs provide education in vocations, behavioral tutoring and life skills that equip juveniles for life when they get into the society as they come out of the prison.⁴¹ National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (2019) accepts these programs that are conducted in Observation Homes, Special Homes and Fit Facilities to evaluate child development before outright release or further care appraisal.⁴²

Mental health support services form the major part of the solution in preventing and rehabilitating juvenile delinquency. The children in conflict with the law display high levels of trauma or emotional disorders and developmental problems as well as substance abuse problems which may again lead them to commit crimes if no proper treatment will be applied. The juvenile justice system relies on the help of psychologists for evaluation and treatment of such conditions by specialists early.⁴³ Provider of mental health services within institutional care creates fundamental value in that it addresses behavioral problems and affirms patients' well-being and self-esteem.⁴⁴ The rolled out mental health support for children shows unequal successes in different states due to lack of trained professionals and inadequate resource supplies which further presents the need for prompt investment in the child mental health infrastructure.

⁴⁰ Nat'l Comm'n for Protection of Child Rights, *Annual Report* (2019).

⁴¹ Ankur Kumar, Juvenile Rehabilitation under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015: A Socio-Legal Analysis, 6 *J. Legal Stud. & Res.* 210 (2020).

⁴² P. Das & R. Sinha, Mental Health Challenges of Juvenile Offenders: Bridging Policy and Practice, 14 *Indian J. Crim. Psychol.* 112 (2021).

⁴³ R. Chandra & P. Sinha, Mental Health Care in the Juvenile Justice System: Bridging the Gap in India, 63 *Indian J. Psychiatry* 326 (2021).

⁴⁴ R. Chandra & P. Sinha, Mental Health Care in the Juvenile Justice System: Bridging the Gap in India, 63 *Indian J. Psychiatry* 326 (2021).

Conclusion and Suggestion

Juvenile Delinquency is emanated from a melange of societal and psychological influences namely dysfunctional family relations, peer influence, economic deprivation, educational deficits, media violence, and mental health challenges. The study highlights the role lack of parental supervision, neglect and abuse have in causing fertile grounds for deviant behavior. The peer pressure, poverty and poor education facilities compounds the problem further driving the vulnerable youth to antisocial behavior. At the same time, mental health disorders and childhood traumas impede the child's cognitive and emotional development greatly, leading to aggressive and unlawful behavior. Although, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 introduces rehabilitative measures, it is not enough when the causes underlying remain ignored.

In order to combat juvenile delinquency an all-rounded approach is needed which includes:

1. Enhancement of family-oriented interventions by use of counseling and parenting programs.
2. Improving access to quality education and vocational training with a view to minimizing drop-out from school.
3. Increasing community support and mentorship for at risk youth.
4. Injection of media literacy programs to limit the adverse effect of the media.
5. Increasing mental health structure in juvenile institutions with trained professionals.
6. Facilitating the punctual psychological assessment and personalized care plans in the setting of Juvenile Justice.

Early intervention as well as comprehensive rehabilitation plays a major role in the change of the youthful offenders into useful members of the society.