

## A Psychological Constraint Responsible for Shaping Delinquent Behaviour

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### ABSTRACT

In juvenile delinquency, aggressive behaviour can take many different forms, including feelings of resentment, thoughts of vengeance, bullying and sadistic behaviour, murder, etc. This behaviour violates others' rights and social norms, and sometimes the violence is so subtly disguised that the perpetrator is not fully aware of his actions. The goal of the current study is to identify delinquents' persistently aggressive behaviour as an underlying root cause of antisocial behaviour and to hold them accountable for the significant cognitive shift in their social behaviour. Additionally, an effort has been made to comprehend and analyse factors like age, the nature of offences, and the timing of offences related to antisocial behaviour. The study included a total of 150 samples (75 juvenile delinquents from Delhi remand homes and 75 Juvenile non-delinquents) that were selected through purposive sampling. Each participant is asked to respond to the aggression scale and interview schedule for assessing their variables (age, nature of offenses, and initiation of offenses). The difference in aggression between delinquents and non-delinquents was calculated by the 't-test and found significant at P (>.01). The descriptive analysis of delinquents shows that adolescents in the major 17-year-old age group were more engaged in antisocial behavior, and their antisocial behaviour was much influenced by association with maladaptive peers. Most of the juvenile delinquents were involved in serious crimes, such as homicides. The juvenile justice system should emphasize comprehending the adolescent's psychological perspective of his or her own latent violent behaviour, which has a substantial influence on the development of juvenile offending behaviours.

**Keywords:** *Juvenile Delinquency, Aggression, Age, Nature of Offence, Initiation of Offence*

Adolescents make up a sizable portion of the population in India (45%), and their ages vary from 12 to 18 years. In India, there are numerous laws, rules, and social programmes that are being implemented on both a governmental and non-governmental level to safeguard children and give them a safe environment. Despite all the precautions and measures taken by the country, juvenile delinquency has emerged and developed rapidly, causing widespread public concern. Statistics show that the number of

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crimes committed by minors is rising (Kaimal et al.). According to the statistics released by the National Record Bureau of India in 2021, the number of crimes reportedly committed by juveniles was more than 31,170, an increase of almost 4.7 compared to 2020. More than 90% of the juveniles apprehended for these crimes are boys. In 2021, the age group of 16 to 18 years accounted for the majority of juveniles in conflict with the law who were apprehended for crimes under the IPC and SLL (28,539 out of 37,444). A sizable share of adolescent crime is committed by repeat offenders, who frequently have a history of persistently aggressive behaviour. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), 60 to 80 percent of juvenile offenders fall into that group for at least one mental health issue. About 80% of this population has at least two mental health or substance abuse difficulties. Additionally, children and adolescents with significant emotional disabilities make up around 20% of those held in juvenile detention institutions.

### ***Aggression and Delinquent Behavior***

Aggression can be defined as the intentional infliction of physical or psychological harm on another person. A perpetrator's belief that their action will cause harm to another is crucial. (Anderson and Bushman), (Baron and Richardson). The term "aggression" encompasses a diverse range of behaviors, from overt antisocial behaviour like open antagonism and defiance to hidden antisocial activity like stealing or lying. Humans use aggression to accomplish goals, to demonstrate dominance, to declare possession, to compete with others, and to express hatred, rage, frustration, tension, and other negative emotions (Kaimal et al.). Aggression is a human response to an umbrella of negative emotions and situations, including but not limited to anger, frustration, stress, hostility, fear, and pain. It is the drive to accomplish something, establish dominance, show possessions, and compete with others. The environment a child is exposed to at home or at school, the parenting style of the child's parents, the quality of the child's relationships, the child's lack of social skills, the child's inability to cope with frustration, and even the use of drugs or alcohol among the child's peers can all play a role in the development of aggressive behaviour in children. The increasing production of androgen hormones in adolescent boys is the root cause of their increased aggression and hostility (Natarajan and Bhubaneswar). Aggression can take the form of physical harm, such as punching or stabbing another person, or it can be verbal, such as when someone yells, screams, curses, or calls another person derogatory names. Aggression that does not involve physical contact can also take the form of relational hostility, or social aggression. In contrast to instrumental aggression, which is deliberate and planned, emotional aggression is spontaneous and results from impulsive, rapid feelings.

Adolescent delinquency is generally predicted by childhood aggression, but research in this field shows that there are odd exceptions, with some highly aggressive adolescents turning into relatively nondelinquent adolescents. This draws attention to the reasons why early violence is not always followed by later delinquency. Anger is thought to be a prominent variable in driving antisocial behaviour among young people. Research shows that, in general, aggressive behaviour in childhood is a predictor of delinquency in later years. However, there are occasional cases of extremely violent youngsters who go on to be generally non-delinquent teenagers. This shift in focus to the causes of why childhood hostility isn't always a precursor to criminal behaviour Previous studies' results show that juvenile delinquent conduct is one of the most significant predictors of aggressive and criminal conduct in adulthood (Reef et al.); Mason et al.) point out that rebelliousness and delinquency may be precursors to violent conduct later on. This may represent a simpler form of acting out of a lack of ability to control one's impulses. Acland and his colleagues conducted research to look at official risk and (re)offending statistics among a sample of

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juveniles involved in the justice system to anticipate how anger and its characteristics (fuse and duration) are related to youths' tendencies toward violence and offending. This study included justice-involved youth (N = 548) (age = 14.87, SD = 1.40) from United States juvenile correctional facilities. The results show that having a short anger span is connected to a greater risk of immediate aggression, but prolonged anger is correlated with violence only in the mid- to late adolescent years. This shows that a short temper predicts the continuation of nonviolent offending among adolescents, but prolonged indignation predicts recidivism among violent offenders. (Acland and Cavanagh).

### *Purpose of the Study*

In recent years, adolescent involvement in morbid delinquency has grown in leaps and bounds around the world and represents a significant problem for social and criminal justice. Since adolescence is the grey phase of childhood, children experience rapid, radical shifts in physical, mental, moral, intellectual, sexual, and social order with the occasional moment of emotional insatiability, worries, anxieties, conflicts, and complexities, and then often participate in proving their own independence and social acceptance. Therefore, the rationale of the present research study is to identify delinquents' persistently aggressive behaviour as an underlying root cause of deviant behaviour and to hold them accountable for the significant cognitive shift in their adaptation of antisocial behaviour. Additionally, an effort has been made to comprehend and analyze factors like age, the nature of offences, and the initiation of offences related to antisocial behaviour.

### *Research Objectives*

- To understand the predictive role of aggression as a psychological constraint responsible for shaping and escalating deviant behaviour in juvenile delinquents.
- To identify the predictive role of age, nature of offenses, and causation of ignition in understanding the deviant behaviour of juvenile delinquents.

### *Hypothesis*

H1: There would be no significant differences between juvenile delinquents and Juvenile Non-Delinquent in terms of aggression.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Research Design*

In the present study, the aggressive behaviour of juvenile delinquents was studied using a Exploratory research design, semi-structured interview, standardized questionnaire, as a data collection method.

### *Variable Under study*

- Independent variable: Male Juvenile delinquents and Male Juvenile non-delinquents.
- Dependent variable: Aggression

### *Sample*

In the current study, 75 juvenile offenders from State Observation Homes—also known as minors in conflict with the law—as well as 75 male non-delinquents from various Delhi neighborhoods—rural, urban, and semi-urban—were included. Their ages range from 12 to 18 years, and one of our inclusion criteria was that they have participated in youthful crimes like theft, homicide, and drug abuse/sexual assault. A purposive random sampling was employed in this study.

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### *Inclusion Criteria*

- Male juvenile offenders were drawn from Delhi's juvenile correctional facilities, while their non-delinquent counterparts were drawn from the Delhi's rural, urban, and semi-urban neighborhood.
- Only those male juvenile delinquents and male juvenile non- delinquents were considered whose age ranges from 13-18 Years.
- Only those juvenile delinquents were selected who have committed offence ranging from petty theft to serious/Felony offence such as murder, rape, kidnapping, dacoity etc.

### *Exclusion Criteria*

- Only those male juvenile delinquents and male juvenile non -delinquents who were below the age of 12 years.
- Only those male juvenile delinquents and male juvenile non -delinquents were not selected whose mental health was not sound.

### *Materials*

- **The semi-structured interview:** The researchers developed a semi-structured interview schedule to obtain the dates related to the age of the suspect, the nature of the offence, and the time of the first offence (only for juvenile delinquents).
- **Aggression Scale:** Dr. R.L. Bharadwaj's aggression scale, developed in 2008, was used in this research study. It is a self-administering scale consisting of 28 items. It can be given to children as young as 10 years old, both individually and in groups. The reliability of the aggression test was shown to be between.86 and.83 on the extraversion scale and.85 and.90 on the neuroticism scale. The scoring of these five alternatives follows a system of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 from the upper to the lower end. The total aggression score of the subject would be the sum of all scores obtained on each item.

### *Statistical analysis*

Each participant received instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and self-report. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0 was also used for the analysis of the results. Furthermore, a two-tailed independent t-test was conducted to determine the connection and evaluate the hypothesis. Age, nature of offences, and causes of initiation of offences were assessed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation.

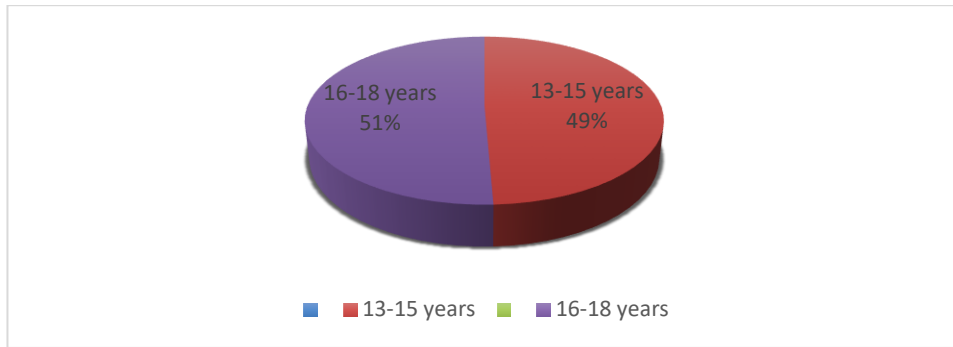
## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

The tables and graphs below show the information gathered during the interview schedule from juvenile delinquents.

*Table 1: Age of Juvenile Delinquents*

<b>Juvenile Delinquents</b>		
<b>Age group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
13-15 years	37	49.3
16-18 years	38	50.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

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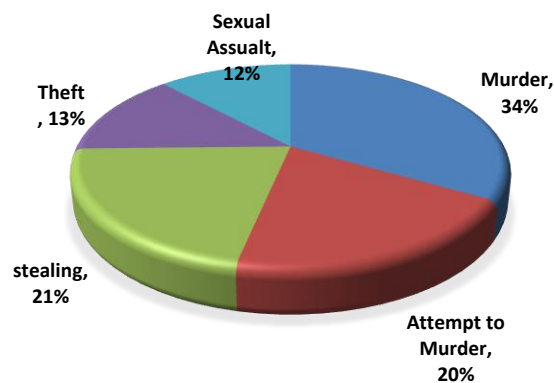


**Figure 1: Age of Juvenile Delinquents**

Table 1 reveals that between the ages of 16 and 18, juvenile offenders made up 50.7% of the population, while those between the ages of 13 and 15 accounted for 49.3%. Juveniles in their mid-teens may be experiencing a "maturity crisis" and acting out more frequently because of it. In 2019, the FBI published its 2018 data analysis, in which in the United States alone only 718,962 children under the age of 18, 3,500 children under the age of 10, 38,000 children between the ages of 10 and 12, and more than 355,000 children between the ages of 13 and 16 were identified with an elevated rate of juvenile arrest. Similarly, in India, the juvenile justice system was revised in 2012 after a dreadful violent act of sexual assault and physical abuse was inflicted on a 23-year-old woman in New Delhi, ('Nirbhaya case') by six male accused. The juvenile accused was blamed for being the most brutal and without remorse of the six convicts, positioning the issue within a broader discussion of the relationship between age of crime and mental maturity of the accused.

**Table 2: Nature of Offences**

Nature of Offences	Frequency	%
<b>Murder</b>	25	33.3
<b>Attempt to Murder</b>	15	20
<b>Stealing</b>	16	21.3
<b>Theft</b>	10	13.3
<b>Sexual Assault</b>	9	12
<b>Total</b>	75	100



**Figure 2: Nature of Offences**

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In the table 2 and figure 2, an overview of the types of crimes committed by juvenile offenders is presented. According to the aforementioned table, theft was perpetrated by 13.3% of juvenile offenders, rape and sexual assault by 12%, and theft by 21.3%. In this study, it was found that the majority of young people—33.3%—were charged with murder and 20% were implicated in murder attempts. Remarkably, it was found that all of the offenders were addicted on drug use, including marijuana, alcohol, smoking, and drinking.

**Table 3: Causes of Initiation of Offence**

<b>Causes of initiation of Offences</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Maladaptive Peer Influence</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>66.7</b>
<b>Social Learning (Familial or Community Exposure)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Finical Stressor</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Coercion by Force</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Anger</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>



**Figure 3: Causes of Initiation of Offences**

The causative factor for delinquent behaviour among delinquents is shown in Table 3 and Figure 3. Maladaptive peer relationships, substance misuse, social learning, rage, financial stress, and coercion by force are found to be more common causal factors that lead to antisocial conduct. The current study reveals that among all these elements, 66.7% of young people had negative peer pressure and 20% had committed crimes as a result of poor anger management. While substance misuse, financial hardship, and coercion by force all contributed to 6% of juveniles acquiring delinquent tendencies, social learning had an impact on about 6% of them as well. Previous research showed that among all the risk factors for promoting deviant behaviour in adolescents, harmful peer influence is a more significant indicator and that adolescents will engage in violent behaviour more frequently in the future if they associate with violent peers when they are 15 years old. Children who were 10 at the start of the longitudinal study conducted the sample (N = 808). The element of involvement with antisocial peers was tested in the logistic regression analysis to see whether individuals who had displayed childhood regression were more likely to become violent adults (Noyori-Corbett and Moon; Herrenkohl et al.).

### **Hypothesis Analysis**

Table 4 illustrates the findings of the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The results of an independent-sample t-test showed that there was a significant difference in

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aggressive behaviour between juvenile offenders and controls, with juvenile offenders being found to be more aggressive than non-criminal controls.

*Table 4: Descriptive statistics and t-value significance of the difference in aggression between delinquents and non-delinquents.*

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Delinquents	75	64.41	14.39	-5.762	149	.00
Non-delinquents	75	80.23	18.91			

*Significant at \*\*P >0.01 level*

The purpose of the hypothesis was to compare the levels of aggression between juvenile delinquents and non-delinquent students. The results are displayed in Table 4 after computing the t-value, standard deviation, and standard error of difference after administering the scale regarding aggression. In Table 4, the mean score and standard deviation for delinquents are (Mean = 64.41, SD = 14.39) and for Juvenile non-delinquents are (Mean = 80.23, SD = 18.91), respectively. The t-test was calculated, and the value is (-5.76), and significant at p (.01). As a result, the hypothesis "No significant differences in aggression level between male juvenile delinquents and male juvenile non-delinquents" is Rejected . It shows that young people who broke the law were more aggressive than young people who didn't break the law.

## DISCUSSION

Adolescent delinquency is a serious problem that needs to be addressed head-on and managed sensitively by society at large. Adolescent antisocial behaviour, of which delinquency and violence are major components, appears to follow two distinct developmental pathways. The onset of the adolescent limited type is often before puberty, peaks in the early to mid-middle years of adolescence, and then declines sharply as the teen transitions into adulthood. Those of the life-course persistent type engage in antisocial behaviour throughout their lives, beginning in early childhood. Adolescents who engage in violence are often impulsive and psychologically voracious. The presence of a high level of aggression among juvenile delinquents has been confirmed by various research studies. The negative effects of juvenile delinquency and aggressiveness on both the perpetrators and the victims make this issue a serious environmental concern. Negative health outcomes, such as those caused by psychiatric disorders (including depression), physical disabilities, and premature deaths, are often experienced by offenders as a result of their criminal behaviour (Kolarcik et al.; Reingle et al.). Numerous studies have investigated the link between hostile attention bias and aggressive conduct, but the findings have been mixed (Zhao et al.). On the one hand, research on violent offenders has shown a strong link between aggressive behaviour and a predisposition to focus on hostile language and nonverbal cues such as aggressive body language, furious facial expressions, and threat stimuli (Zhao et al.); Brugman et al).

### *Limitations of the study*

- After the screening, only 75 juvenile offenders were included in the study, which is a small sample size. This was because it was hard to get data on juvenile offenders.
- The juvenile offenders in this study tended to be independent in order to identify the level of aggressive behaviour and environmental factors, so it was not possible to develop a corresponding control group in the study. As a result, the current findings

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were restricted to the aggressive behaviour of juvenile offenders in a juvenile correctional facility (Ren et al.).

### CONCLUSION

The current study also drew attention to the fact that 16- to 18-year-olds made up the age group with the highest percentage of juvenile offenders engaging in antisocial behaviour and that most of them were charged with murder and were subject to detrimental peer pressure. The juvenile justice system is directly affected by the prevalence of aggressive and antisocial conduct, so it's crucial that we measure this problem pathway accurately. It is vital to address the relationship between a person's psychological state, criminal conduct, and the ensuing punishment in order to replace the outdated, vengeance-focused criminal justice system with a current one that is focused on deterrence and reformation.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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