
Juvenile Delinquency as a Behavioural Problem

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile can be defined as a child who has not attained a certain age at which he, like an adult person under the law of the land, can be held liable for his criminal acts. The juvenile is a child who is alleged to have committed /violated some law which declares the act or omission on the part of the child as an offence. The causes of juvenile delinquency are varied. The concept of delinquency also varies with the point of view of the people who feel challenged by it. Ferdinand presented two categories of juvenile offenders: Neurotic Offender and Character disorder offenders. Various theories behind delinquency like Psychogenic theory, Motivational theory, Psychoanalytical, Psychiatric theory and Medico-Biological theory are explained. Causes behind delinquency are explained in terms of biological, socio-environmental, psychological, physiological and personal causes. Behavioural characteristics in which delinquents have been found to cluster into behavior dimension sub-groups. In a series of multivariate research projects Quay (1987) has shown that there is a similarity to these dimensions of behaviour in juveniles to categories defined by researchers of child psychopathology. Prevention is necessary for such children. First of all, we should identify such juveniles and thereafter give him treatment. They will become habitual offender if they are not

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timely prevented from committing the offence. The most effective way to prevent juvenile delinquency has indisputably been to assist children and their families early on. For late blooming delinquency, broad-based programmes may be needed that address the individual, peer group, family and community. Parents are also counseled to learn the importance of monitoring their children more closely. Numerous state programs attempt early intervention, and federal funding for community initiatives has allowed independent groups to tackle the problem in new ways. Preventive programmes of delinquents including individual and environmental programmes have been suggested. Role of police, enforcement of law, aftercare and rehabilitation programmes along with the role of counseling in delinquents have been stressed upon.

Keywords: *Juvenile Delinquency, Behavioural Problem*

Juvenile can be defined as a child who has not attained a certain age at which he, like an adult person under the law of the land, can be held liable for his criminal acts. The juvenile is a child who is alleged to have committed or violated some law which declares the act or omission on the part of the child as an offence. The word delinquency is derived from the Latin word “delinquere” meaning de i.e. away and linquere i.e. to leave thus, meaning to leave or to abandon. Originally, the word had an objective meaning as it referred to parents who neglected and abandoned their children¹. Delinquency is an act or conduct of a juvenile which is socially undesirable. Juvenile delinquency generally means the failure of children to meet certain obligations expected of them by the society². The juvenile delinquency is expression of unsatisfied desires and urges. For a delinquent, his deviant act is a normal response to his inner desire. Like a non-delinquent a delinquent is also conditioned by various attending and prevailing circumstances around him.

The causes of juvenile delinquency are varied. The concept of delinquency also varies with the point of view of the people who feel challenged by it. According to a social worker, "delinquency consisted

of socially unaccepted acts". A psychiatrist suggests that delinquent behavior is activity which deviates from the normal. And a lawyer would say juvenile delinquency is what the law says it is. In the words of W.H. Sheldon, it is "behavior disappointing beyond reasonable expectation". It becomes difficult to determine where exactly the approved behavior ends and where from the disapproved begins³.

Ferdinand presented two categories of juvenile offenders as under:

(1) **Neurotic Offenders**- They are the offenders whose delinquency is the result of powerful unconscious impulses which often produces guilt which in turn, motivates them to act out their delinquency in their community so that they will be caught and punished. The delinquent act is sometimes considered symbolic. For example, if they steal, it is done for love and not for a material gain. To such delinquents, delinquency is a way of handling their internal problems by externalizing the problem within the environment.

(2) **Character Disorder Offenders** - This type of offenders feel very little guilty when they commit the acts of delinquency. Because of a lack of positive identification models in their environment, they have failed to develop self-control and do what they want to do when they feel like doing it. They are unable to sublimate their impulses in a socially acceptable manner. They have not developed an adequate conscience structure or superego. They come from disorganized families and have had a barren environment in their childhood. They are self-centered and feel to be aloof and have difficulty in forming meaningful relationships⁴.

Schafer emphasized on psychological typologies and psychological dynamics of personality as the basis of classification of juvenile delinquents which are as follows:

(1) **Mentally Defective**

This is an individual who has an organic problem and who has difficulty in controlling himself because of it. For example, offenders who are mentally defective are involved in petty crimes. This category also includes mentally retarded youngsters.

(2) Situational Offenders

They are similar to the accidental offenders but, in these cases, there are more contributing factors. Their delinquency is precipitated by a crisis or by some external event which they are unable to handle. In other words, they do not necessarily go out looking for trouble but because of tempering circumstances, they do not use good judgment.

(3) Psychotic Offenders

A small number of youngsters do not have contact with reality. They may be classified as schizophrenic or may be given some other psychiatric label. As a result of dysfunctional thought patterns, they may hallucinate, have delusions or "hear voices" that command them to become involved in certain types of delinquent behaviour. The incidence of psychotic oriented delinquency is minimal in relation to the other forms.

(4) Cultural Offenders

Youngsters in this category have either emulated a faculty identification model or they live in an economically and socially deprived environment. Cultural offenders are considered normal members of a deviant sub-culture and their patterns of behaviour are often accepted and called normative in their own environment⁵. The problem of child (juvenile) delinquency like many other social evils is linked up with the imperfections and maladjustment of our society and is also connected with the present day system of education to some extent. This system aims more at the training of the intellect than the education of the emotions which play such a vital part in the formation of the pattern of the child's behaviour and personality. But the idea is gradually gaining wider acceptance that the juvenile delinquent needs the sympathy and understanding of the society and social agencies and not the heavy hand of the law⁶.

(A) Psychogenic Theory - In general, this theory stresses the psychological pathology of the delinquent.

(B) Motivational theory which emphasize that legitimate desires that conformity, cannot satisfy force a person into deviance⁷.

(C) Psychoanalytical and Psychiatric Theory –Airchornasserted that there must be something in child himself which environment brings out

in the form of delinquency. Delinquents behave as they do because they are in some way “Maladjusted” persons. Airchron’s statement indicates further that the environment may function as a precipitating force, but never as primary force in causation⁸.

(D) Medico-Biological Theory - This theory include the hereditary factors, chemical balances within the physical organism, and certainly the influence of physical illness on behaviour⁹.

CAUSES: There is no single cause of Juvenile delinquency but there are many and varied causes. Basically, causes of Juvenile delinquency are of three types.

- Biological
- Socio-Environmental
- Psychological, Physiological and personal

A. Biological Causes: Ocular Ailments, Nose and throat problem, Hearing Problem, Speech Problem, Enuresis, Irritation, Headache, Excessive strength, Hypoglycemia^{10,11,12,13}.

B. Socio-Environmental: Mobility, Cultural conflicts and Family background and Family structure^{14,15}. Some are the factors which emanates from the family background are as under:-

(a) Family Structure and Broken Homes

Family is considered to be the most effective variable in socializing the child and also in serving as a source for learning various types of behaviour. The nature and structure of the family are largely responsible for carving out the personality make-up of the children. Shaw and McKay⁶⁴ (1932), Weeks and Smith (1939), Glueck and Glueck (1950), Browning (1960), Peterson and Becker (1965) have reported in their studies the relationship between broken home and delinquency. Badami (1965) considered broken homes with other factors, such as, poverty, lack of recreational facilities, disorganized family, including family conflicts, and neglect of children to be the important factors causing juvenile delinquency^{16,17,18,19,20}.

(b) Child's Birth Order in the Family/Family Size and Type

Lees and Newson (1954) found differences among the delinquents which could be attributed to sibling position. Their study showed that intermediate children having both older as well as younger siblings were significantly overrepresented in a group of delinquents. Glueck (1950) found delinquent boys were more often from larger families.

(c) Parent-Child Relationship

The pattern of interpersonal relationship with a family is important in shaping the inter-personal behaviour and cognition of the child (Glueck and Glueck, 1950 and Nye, 1958). Bandura and Walters (1956) found that the interpersonal relations between aggressive delinquent boys and their parents were at the behaviour level, characterized by a lack of dependency on the part of the son²¹.

(d) Behaviour of Step and alcoholic Parents

(e) Excessive punishment

(f) Constant Quarrel / Exploitation of Children by their parents^{22,23}

(g) Socio-economic condition / Alcohol/Intoxication/ Peer Group/ Cinema /Role of Press^{24,25,26}

(h) Mental make-up - Mental make-up of the child also conditions his behaviour to a large extent. Various researches reveal that a large proportion of delinquents are feeble minded and deficient in intelligence.

(i) Heredity - The factor of heredity is emphasized a lot when studying the cause of delinquent behaviour. According to Goring, feeble-mindedness is the result of hereditary transmission²⁷.

C. Psychological, Physiological and personal

Psychological and neuro-physiological conditions and ailments, ocular ailment, nose and throat obstructions, eating trouble, speech defects, physical irritations excessive physical strength mental disorder etc; as in the case of normal behaviour, the delinquent behaviour is also affected by intellectual factors. It is commonly observed that intelligent persons in teenagers perform delinquent acts in rather refined manner. Early studies by Goring (1913), Goddard (1921), found low intelligence

as the single factor influencing juvenile delinquency. In India, Kundu (1969) found delinquents to be of inferior intelligence. In contrast, some researchers have found delinquents to be more intelligent. Muthayya and Bhaskaran (1964) found delinquents to be slightly more intelligent than normals. The personality traits, such as neuroticism, psychoticism, frustration and maladjustment appear to be important causative factors of juvenile delinquency. Hinderlang (1971) found delinquents to be more neurotic than non-delinquents. Shanna (1979) found delinquents to be highly frustrated. They were reported to have higher scores on regression and aggression. Moreover, Basu (1984) on the basis of his study pointed out that emotional instability, insecurity, feelings of inadequacy (both in respect of primary and secondary needs) and inferiority are common denominations or behaviour disorders in juvenile delinquency. Healy and Bronner (1936) found that delinquents were either rejected, deprived or insecure. Russell (1977) found that neuroticism, depression, sensitivity, impulsivity, social extroversion and social non-conformity were dominant personality characteristics in juvenile delinquents. Delinquents have often been observed to be rigid in their behaviour and do not easily change their pursuits. Sivanandam (1990) in her study indicated that the girl delinquents and women criminals were high on introgression blame avoidance, evading frustration, need persistence, group conformity rating and low on obstacle dominance²⁸.

Behavioural Characteristics of Delinquents

Delinquents have been found to cluster into behavior dimension sub-groups. In a series of multivariate research projects Quay (1987) has shown that there is a similarity to these dimensions of behaviour in juveniles to categories defined by researchers of child psychopathology. These dimensions referred to above include under-socialised aggressive, which is seen to involve destructive and aggressive behaviour similar to conduct disorder, and which produces elevated externalising scores on the Achenbach Youth Self-Report. A second grouping is the socialised-aggressive dimension which describes juveniles who associate with delinquent peers. A third dimension is that

of immaturity-attention deficit which is akin to hyperactivity, and the last dimension is anxiety withdrawal, which is internalising in character and associated with such scales on the Achenbach Youth Self Report^{29,30}.

Prevention of Juvenile delinquency

Prevention is necessary for such children. First of all, we should identify such juveniles and thereafter give him treatment. They will become habitual offender if they are not timely prevented from committing the offence. The most effective way to prevent juvenile delinquency has indisputably been to assist children and their families early on. Numerous state programs attempt early intervention, and federal funding for community initiatives has allowed independent groups to tackle the problem in new ways. The most effective programs share the following key components. There are so many Jurists and criminologists who suggested many provisions for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Some of the provisions are very useful for the welfare of the juveniles and their development.

Delinquency Prevention is the broad term for all efforts aimed at preventing youth from becoming involved in criminal, or other antisocial, activity. Increasingly, governments are recognizing the importance of allocating resources for the prevention of delinquency. Prevention services include activities such as substance abuse education and treatment, family counseling, youth mentoring, parenting education, educational support, and youth sheltering.

Preventive Programmes of Juvenile Delinquency

There may be two kinds of programmes for preventing the juvenile delinquency;

(i) Individual Programme

Individual programme involves the prevention of delinquency through counseling, psychotherapy and proper education.

(ii) Environmental programme

Environmental programme involves the employment of techniques with a view to changing the socio-economic context likely to promote delinquency.

These two forms of preventive approaches are reflected in the following strategies, which are adopted in crime prevention programmes.

(i) Individual Programme

(a) Clinical programme

The object of this clinic is to provide aids through Psychiatrists Clinical Psychologists and Psychiatric Social workers to help the Juveniles delinquents in understanding their personality problems.

Taft and England have listed the function of clinics as follows

- To participate in discovery of pre delinquents.
- To investigate cases selected for study and treatment.
- To treat cases itself or to refer cases to other agencies for treatment.
- To interest other against in Psychiatrically oriented types of treatment of behavioral disorders in children.
- To reveal the community unmet needs of children.
- To cooperate in training of students intending to specialize in treatment of behavioural problems³¹

(b) Educational Programme

The impacts of educational institutions are very significant in the countries where almost every child going to school and preventive programme can be launched in an effective manner through the schools. Teachers should not discriminate among the students; they should be treated equally and provided the moral education which is very helpful to the students for their life stand. Moral education is a significant factor for the students, which decide their life. They should be able to understand the difference between right and wrong ideas which are favourable for them and which are not.

(c) Mental Hygiene

This method is also helpful in prevention and treatment of Juvenile delinquency. To prevent the mental conflict and to bring about a proper mental adjustment in childhood and value of mental therapy in curing a mental disturbance cannot be over-emphasized. The mission of life must be determined and energies must be directed towards the fulfillment of the high mission. Development of high sentiment and values in child also prevent Juvenile Delinquency. In October 1944, on

occasion of inauguration of the Indian Council for Mental Hygiene Dr. K.R. Masani, the then Director of Indian Institute 72 of Psychiatry and Mental Hygiene, said that the application of mental Hygiene was wide and varied and in Education, Law, Medicine, Public health, Industry, mental hygiene played an important role in preventing the delinquency and crime.

(d) Parent education

Every community should ensure opportunities for parental educations, which will help making good homes, improve family relationship, and education and care of children. Some educational programmes inform parents on how to raise healthy children.

(e) Recreational programmes

The recreational programmes are a good check on delinquency. Recreation programs enable youths to mix up with other adults and children in the community and develop friendship. Such positive friendships may assist children in later years. Youth programs are designed to fit the personalities and skills of different children and may include sports, dancing, music, rock climbing, drama, karate, bowling, art, and other activities. It is believed that the energies of youth can be very well channelised into pursuits like sport games and other healthy activities, which would counteract delinquent among the participants. The establishment of recreational agencies like sports, playgrounds community centers, concerts drama, puppet shows are very necessary for preventing the delinquency and developing social group work and youth groups. In rural areas, recreational agencies should provide open air meeting halls, playgrounds for sports and cultural activities. Youth organizations and groups/agencies should take and assume the responsibility for organizing these programmes so that Juvenile may be kept away from delinquency.

(f) Removal of inferiority complex

Inferiority complex, fear, apprehension may sometimes lead the child to commit crime under wrong and misplaced belief/impression of proving himself. Children deserve encouragement to become confident and good spirited person. Discouragement pulls them behind in their life. They should be properly to face various good and bad phases of life and

their failures should not be criticized. Praise cheer, sympathy and love should be showered to banish inferiority complex³².

(ii) Environmental programme

(a) Community Programmes

The basic aim of community programme is to reach the people in need of help instead of people approaching the workers and agencies. Another significance of this programme is that the participation of the local community is considered to be more important and role of professional leadership is sought to be kept at the minimum level. Marshal B. Clinard has outlined the key supposition of these programmes as follows :

- Local people will participate in efforts to change neighborhood conditions.
- And they do not accept an adverse social and physical environment as natural and enviable
- Because selfimposed changes in the immediate Environment will have real significance to the resident and consequently will have more permanent effect^{33,34}.

(b) Publicity

This method can also be very useful in preventing the Juvenile Delinquency. The newspapers, magazines, radio, television and motion pictures etc. should show the juvenile delinquency in proper perspective honestly and should also present real reports about the various wrong done by the juveniles and analyze its true causes and also protect the juvenile against false and misleading reporting. The actual position should be presented and produced before the society about their delinquent behavior so that they may be properly assessed.³⁵

(c) Parental love and affection

Child needs unconditional, immediate and true love, care and protection of his mother and father. On account of deprivation of such love and care the child may develop frustration and dissatisfaction leading to crime. So parental love, care and protection is very necessary for the child to prevent him for committing or doing the crime.

(d) Family Environment

Family factors which may have an influence on offending includes the level of parental supervision, the way parents discipline a child, parental conflict or separation, criminal parents or siblings, and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Many studies have found a strong correlation between a lack of supervision and offending, and it appears to be the most important family influence on offending.

Role of Police

The police have an important role in apprehending and protection of juvenile delinquents. The police have more contact with the juvenile than any other agency dealing with the juvenile delinquents. The police is a separate agency from the Juvenile Court and it is also guided and directed by the policies and philosophies of the Juvenile Court with which the police has to work. Thus, in order to understand the police's behavior towards Juveniles, it is essential to understand all the facts of the Juvenile Court.

Enforcement of Law

Constant surveillance is one of the ways in which law and order is maintained and delinquency and crime is substantially reduced in amount and seriousness. The regulatory activities are protective as well as preventive. Regular inspection and investigating may reduce the crime and delinquency in the places. If supervision by the police reduces or eliminates the illegal activities of adults, juvenile delinquency will also be decreased substantially particularly on public places³⁶.

Aftercare and Rehabilitation programmes

Most of the children released from special schools and other such institutions find themselves in need of great help for their rehabilitation in the community. They immediately require some shelter and a reasonable support and proper guidance for their settlement in the society and return in the main stream. Few other neglected and uncontrollable children also require some temporary help till they are taken back by their parents / guardians³⁷.

ROLE OF COUNSELLING

Researchers (Hawkins 1987; Reid 1993; Yoshikawa 1994) have suggested that early prevention programmes, specifically before school entry hold the greatest promise for early starters. Prevention efforts that begin before school entry may focus almost exclusively on parents and their child rearing practices. It is, therefore, counseled that parents management training centers be established in various communities. In these centers parents may receive training on how to interact differently with their children. Strategies may be geared towards early prevention and alternation of harsh and inconsistent parenting, waiting until youth commit their first crime may be too late for preventing this type of delinquency.

Parents Management Training aimed at improving health care, parents' involvement and counseling to parents may be introduced in these centres. Training may include a daily 1-2 hours class-room sessions for children, a weekly home visit to each mother and child that attend the programme and a monthly parents meetings to assess the success of the training. The home visitors may counsel the mothers, model parent and-child interaction and may assist in developing contacts and referral to other agencies where necessary. These training programs may increase positive reinforcement among family members improved communication, negotiation and problem-solving skills. Another aspect of this training programme may include teaching the children how to engage in a step-by-step approach to solve interpersonal problems. These may include teaching how to be less aggressive, impulsive, impatient and engage in fewer temper tantrums including exhibiting more concern for each other.

For late blooming delinquency, broad-based programmes may be needed that address the individual, peer group, family and community. Adolescents are counselled to learn how to resist negative peer pressure. Parents are also counseled to learn the importance of monitoring their children more closely. Communities need to take steps to provide definite consequences for youth misbehavior, but avoid labeling first time offenders as "delinquent". Communities can also take steps to support and provide opportunities for youth to demonstrate their

maturity in ways to benefit the society. The initial step in managing delinquency and juvenile crime is a thorough diagnosis of underlying causes by a professional counselor. At this point it should be borne in mind that therapy with the delinquents should be geared towards consideration of the delinquents total life adjustment. Such a consideration could bring significant and lasting changes in the delinquents' personality patterns. Through this insight-oriented counseling the insight-oriented counselor listens to the youth's concerns and problems and lead him or her to gain insight into the causes of these problems; this insight, in turn, is expected to lead the youth to discontinue delinquent behaviors. Sometimes the counselor also works with the youth to generate alternative solutions to the youth's problems.

An important management strategy by counselors for juvenile crimes is the family therapy technique. In this technique, the child is allowed to express his/her feelings about the world. Then the parent and other members of the family are able to see the child's world through the child's own perspective and picture the adolescent as a person striving for acceptance and individuality. As parents and family members begin to understand the adolescent's motivations and need the adolescent is struggling to meet, they can learn to help meet such needs in a more wholesome and acceptable manner. It is also counseled that counselors should evaluate the school adjustment, vocational opportunities and leisure time activities of the delinquents. On school adjustment, the delinquency could result from poor performance at school. Where the delinquency results from feelings of failure, the possibility of remedial study programme, securing a private tutor or checking on the adolescents' intellectual capacity may be considered. All these could lead the adolescent to an opportunity to experience success and accomplishment.

Delinquency may also result from vocational opportunities. In this case, the delinquency could result from the frustration of not feeling fulfilled or not being gainfully employed. A cursory observation shows that many adolescents, as a result of poor academic performances in secondary or lower education results become confused and unhappy and join gang to move with others like them to either

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while away their time or 'deaden' their feelings of failure. It may not be surprising, therefore, to find majority of these adolescents getting into deeper troubles and crimes on leisure-time activities, it may be observed that many delinquents are not engaged in wholesome recreations. It is, therefore, counseled that the counselor, therapist, parents or anyone interested in assisting the delinquent to change from delinquency to wholesome behavior may be able to help by providing wholesome recreation avenues for the delinquents. Youth's activities, volunteer jobs within the community for community development or religious activities based on ethical standards and norms maybe focused. Furthermore, successful individuals in various fields of work who are from the community may be called upon to give talks on job placement and work experience. This may help the delinquents to learn more interpersonal skills which they may lack in relation to supervisors and co-workers. Their poor problem solving skills in such areas as work attire, transportation and punctuality may also be addressed along with money management skills. Competency development programs may be designed in various youth counseling centers in the communities. These programs features may include; assisting youth in setting specific and measurable goals, objectively diagnosing the youth's skill deficits and consecrating on providing the youth with necessary practical living, learning and working skills^{38,39,40}.

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