

Causes and consequences of juvenile delinquency in India

Prakash Haveripet

Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, Karnatak Science College, Dharwad. Karnataka, India

Abstract

As per the statistics available, there are 10.2 juvenile offenders per 1 lack population in the world. In India the percentage of recorded juvenile crimes are about 0.9 to 1 % of total crimes. Juvenile delinquency is one of the burning issues all over the world. The paper has been designed to explore the causes, consequences and diversity of criminal activities by juvenile delinquents. Sample has been selected purposively and social survey method is used to collect data. It is revealed from the study that, no particular reason is responsible for juveniles' delinquency- a variety of reasons are responsible for this. Lack of proper family control, conflict in family, situation of residential area, impact of movies etc. are equally responsible for the juvenile delinquency. A number of juveniles are incapable to maintain their basic needs and to get proper recreation from their family. Consequently, they are involving in many anti-social activities to fulfill their basic needs and recreation through earning money.

Keywords: Juvenile, Delinquency, Recreation, Basic Needs, Criminal activities, Indian scenario.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues in crime today is juvenile delinquency. Till 19th century, children who committed crimes faced about the same punishment as an adult criminals like public shaming, incarceration and even execution by hanging. Towards end of 19th century, reformers such as Jane Addams of Chicago worked to develop a new system of justice designed to protect the abused children from harm and reform trouble making youth.

Juvenile crime is a perennial public concern, although public perceptions of juvenile crime are often shaped by misconceptions and unwarranted fears rather than by objective facts. For example, in 1996 the cover of a national magazine made the alarming claim that "Juvenile violence is soaring - and it's going to get worse." Juvenile crime traditionally refers to criminal acts committed by persons under age eighteen. If one includes status offenses, such as consuming alcohol, smoking, being truant from school, running away, and violating curfews, that are crimes only because the person committing them is underage, then the majority of youth in the United States might at some point be classified as delinquent offenders! Non status offenses are much less common. According to Snyder and Sickmund's 1999 report only about 5 percent of juveniles are ever arrested, and more than 90 percent of the arrests are for nonviolent crimes. Of course, arrest statistics undercount the true numbers of offenses, since an unknown number of offenses committed by juveniles go undetected. Self-report studies generally reveal higher prevalence rates; for example, among high school seniors, the annual prevalence of committing an assault with injury to the victim was 10 to 15 percent and the prevalence of robbery with a

weapon was 5 percent.

Young people violating the rules and thus disturbing the social order attract the attention of the social control agencies. Informal and formal control stakeholders like parents and family on one side and legal institutions like police, courts or prisons on the other have a superior interest in a law-abiding behavior of the next generation. Juvenile misbehavior is, on the whole, not perceived as an imminent danger to society, but as a potential risk for the development of the individual and society alike which has to be reacted to in a positive, empowering way. In contrast to criminal justice against adults juvenile justice is governed by the rehabilitative ideal as the underlying legitimization for intervention in countries (Bernd-Dieter Meier and Abhijit D. Vasmatkar, 2011).

Juveniles account for only about 16 percent of serious violent crimes, but nearly one-third (32%) of property crimes, according to FBI arrest statistics from the Uniform Crime Reports. Juveniles are involved in the majority (54%) of arson arrests and disproportionate numbers of vandalism (42%), motor vehicle theft (35%), and burglary (33%) arrests. Of the 2.5 million juvenile arrests in 1999, the most frequent charges were larceny-theft, simple assaults, drug abuse violations, curfew and loitering, disorderly conduct, and liquor law violations. Arrest statistics are difficult to interpret, because they do not correspond directly with the number of youth arrested or the number of crimes committed; several youths might be arrested for the same crime, a single youth might be arrested multiple times in the same year, or a youth might be arrested once, but charged with multiple offenses. Nevertheless, comparisons of adult and juvenile offenders, again as summarized by Snyder and Sickmund, indicate that juveniles are generally not predisposed to crime, and although they commit a disproportionate number of minor crimes, they are much less likely than adults, especially young adults, to commit serious violent crimes.

India is home to millions of indigent children. Many of them — all too often illiterate, sick, and malnourished — live in neglect with wretched families who cannot take care of them. Millions more are forced into the work force at the time they should be learning how to read and write. Millions still live in the streets as a result of the loss of

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*Corresponding Author

Prakash Haveripet

Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, Karnatak Science College,
Dharwad. Karnataka, India

Email: chebbisameer@yahoo.co.in

their loved ones, the breakdown of their families, or simply because they no longer could endure the abuses inflicted upon them by parents, relatives, and employers. While this phenomenon is by no means new, globalization and economic liberalization have in some instances aggravated the vulnerability of children. In India, where the staggering economic growth continues to produce scores of nouveau riches, the distribution of wealth has grown increasingly unequal. Such growth has certainly not reduced poverty, which continues to afflict hundreds of millions (Federico Ferrara and Valentina Ferrara, 2005)

Incidence of Juvenile Crimes under Indian Penal Code (IPC), India from 1995-2005

Sl. No	Year	Incidence of		Percentage of Juvenile Crimes To Total Crimes	Estimated Mid-Year Population * (In Lakh)	Rate (Incidence of Crime per Lakh Population)
		Juvenile Crimes	Total Cognizable Crimes			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1995	9766	1695696	0.60	9160	1.1
2	1996	10024	1709576	0.60	9319	1.1
3	1997	7909	1719820	0.50	9552	0.8
4	1998	9352	1778815	0.50	9709	1.0
5	1999	8888	1764629	0.50	9866	0.9
6	2000	9267	1771084	0.50	10021	0.9
7	2001 @	16509	1769308	0.90	10270	1.6
8	2002	18560	1780330	1.00	10506	1.8
9	2003	17819	1716120	1.00	10682	1.7
10	2004	19229	1832015	1.00	10856	1.8
11	2005	18939	1822602	1.00	10028	1.7

Note: * Source: The Register General of India

@ As per Revised Definition of Juvenile Justice Act, the Boys Age Group of 16-18 year has also been considered as Juveniles since 2001 onwards.

Source: Crime in India 2005.

The Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

Understanding the causes of juvenile delinquency is an integral part of preventing a young person from involvement in inappropriate, harmful and illegal conduct. Four primary risk factors can identify young people inclined to delinquent activities: individual, family, mental health and substance abuse. Often, a juvenile is exposed to risk factors in more than one of these classifications.

Individual Risk Factors

Several risk factors are identified with juvenile delinquency. A minor who has a lower intelligence and who does not receive a proper education is more prone to become involved in delinquent conduct. Other risk factors include impulsive behavior, uncontrolled aggression and an inability to delay gratification. In many instances, multiple individual risk factors can be identified as contributing to a juvenile's involvement in harmful, destructive and illegal activities.

Family Risk Factors

A consistent pattern of family risk factors are associated with the development of delinquent behavior in young people. These family risk factors include a lack of proper parental supervision, ongoing parental conflict, neglect and abuse (emotional, psychological or physical). Parents who demonstrate a lack of respect for the law and social norms are likely to have children who think similarly. Finally, those children that display the weakest attachment to their parents and families are precisely the same

Juvenile Offenders

There is no single profile or adequate characterization of the diverse group of youth who come to be identified as juvenile offenders. Most youths who commit crimes as juveniles desist in early adulthood, and most who come to juvenile court never return on a new referral. However, a small group of juveniles is prone to continued offending.

juveniles who engage in inappropriate activities, including delinquent conduct.

Mental Health Risk Factors

Several mental health factors are also seen as contributing to juvenile delinquency. It is important to keep in mind, however, that a diagnosis of certain types of mental health conditions--primarily personality disorders--cannot be made in regard to child. However, there are precursors of these conditions that can be exhibited in childhood that tend to end up being displayed through delinquent behavior. A common one is conduct disorder. Conduct disorder is defined as "a lack of empathy and disregard for societal norms." (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, American Psychiatric Association, 2004.)

Substance Abuse Risk Factors

Substance abuse is found in a majority of cases of juvenile delinquency. Two trends are identified in regard to substance abuse and minors. First, juveniles are using more powerful drugs today than was the case as recently as 10 years ago. Second, the age at which some juveniles begin using drugs is younger. Children in elementary schools are found to be using powerful illegal drugs. The use of these illegal substances or the use of legal substances illegally motivates young people to commit crimes to obtain money for drugs. Additionally, juveniles are far more likely to engage in destructive, harmful and illegal activities when using drugs and alcohol.

Identification

Through the process of identifying potential risk factors that spur a juvenile to inappropriate and even illegal conduct and behavior, early interdiction can occur. Positive intervention, through programming, education and counseling, can divert a juvenile from a path that otherwise would result in delinquency as a child and crime as an adult.

CONCLUSION

Exploitation of children has been a long standing practice. These delinquent go through a lot of abuse which vary in nature as physical, sexual, or psychological or as a combination. The abuse has a long lasting and profound effect on a child's life. The problem of child abuse is a serious one and it is unlikely that it gets solved any sooner.

Also the reason why this has prolonged is that the society has affected the children in a negative way and in the society there are factors such as family influence, social environment, mental disorder and sexual abuse. This develops in young people low self-esteem and they go through mental trauma which later correlates with delinquent behaviour.

What needs to be done is the question that arises before us. We cannot uproot this menace but there are solutions to keep a control on the problem of Juvenile Delinquency. In the best interest of the delinquent he or she should be rehabilitated as early as possible and integrated back in the society. Also the State must protect the rights of these children and come up with reformative methods and instill in them values that can socially uplifts them and give them a new found confidence so that they can play a constructive role in the society.

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