

Causes of Juvenile Delinquency : A Study

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Juvenile Delinquency is one of the serious problems of deviation which the children of almost all the modern societies of the world are facing. It is non-conformist behavior on the part of the child and it does manifest as a problem of personal disorganization but also a symptom of social break down. The phenomenon has been considered as a matter of great concern for every class of society down the ages in one or the other forms. According to Morrison (1991, pp.88-89) juvenile delinquency to be major social theme of the current period and he moralizes about the phenomena as “a peculiarly nasty product of the new freedom” involving teenage monsters of both sexes who take drugs, rob, riot and kill “just for kicks”. India is the home of more than one billion people, of whom one-third are children under 18 years of age. At approximately 440 million, not only does India have the world’s largest number of children, but also the largest number of vulnerable child population, of them nearly 44 million are in difficult circumstances. India has witnessed an increase both in crimes committed by children and those committed against them (Renu Sharma, 2010, pp.329-350). Historically, the problem is as old as the society itself. In order to understand the continuing nature of the problem quotations by Edward Stullken (1956, p.6) may be reproduced here. He mentioned in his article that an Egyptian priest almost 6000 years ago wrote on walls of the tomb “there are signs that the world is coming to end because children no longer obey their parents”.

According to Jeffrey Bernstein (2006, p.48) Socrates, the great philosopher also wrote a paragraph about the disrespectful behavior of the children 2400 years ago which says that children now love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are tyrants, not the servant of their households, they no longer rise when elder enters the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before their company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs and tyrannize over their teachers.

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These quotations clearly indicate that deviant behavior among children has posed a serious menace for every society since time immemorial. On the other hand, to check such type of deviant behavior, every society had effective measures of social control through appropriate norms, values and laws. But irrespective of all these, violation of deviation from the set standard remained a matter of great concern for every society. So this phenomenon of law violation, of deviation from the set standards on the part of an adult is known as Crime but when such violation or deviation is undertaken by a youth under certain age it is called Juvenile Delinquency.

Concept of Juvenile Delinquency-The concept of juvenile delinquency is very complex and varies from country to country and even in the various provinces of the same country. No single definition may suit all nations because the sociologists, psychologists and legalists define ‘Juvenile Delinquency’ in their own way. It varies from nation to nation, for what is forbidden to do at one place, is allowed in the other place. For example, defying parents authority, skipping from school are treated as delinquent acts in USA but in India, these acts are not treated as delinquent acts. Likewise, a boy under the age of 14 years cannot be made of guilty of sex offence in England. In India, vandalism, theft, pilfering, street hawking and black marketing are treated as the nature and source of juvenile delinquency. (Shipra Lavania, 1993, pp.1-14).

The term ‘juvenile’ which is derived from the Latin word ‘juvenis’, meaning young. The term juvenile is very delicate as it denotes the fragile nature of children. In India, Juvenile Justice Act of 1986 is treated as model legislation to provide uniformly in the country in respect of juvenile delinquents. It was amended in 2000 named as by Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. According to this Act, ‘Juvenile’ or ‘child’ means a person (boys and girls) who has not completed eighteenth year of age. The act also refers to certain children as neglected juvenile. Neglected juvenile pitfall means that is found begging, without home, without ostensible means of subsistence, destitute, uncontrollable and victimized.

According to the new act named as means Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act 2000, the term ‘delinquent’ is renamed as “juvenile in conflict with the law” But for universal understanding the term delinquent is retained by the researcher in the present study.

The Oxford dictionary defines a juvenile delinquent as “a person below the legal age of (criminal) responsibility and above a certain minimum age, who is held punishable for breaking the law” The legal definition of juvenile delinquency differs from country to country. Even the basic concept of ‘child’ and misbehavior or the ‘delinquent behavior’ itself differ considerably.

For the purpose of understanding the nature and magnitude of juvenile delinquency in India, an analysis of the statistics published by the National Crime Records Bureau has been made. This section of the report includes the incidence of delinquency over the period of time, types of offences committed by a Juvenile; forms of disposal of juveniles arrested, the profile of the juvenile, and so on.

Classification of Juvenile Delinquents and Delinquency-Various authors have attempted to classify juvenile delinquency and delinquents differently.

According to Hirsh (1937, pp.88-107) delineated the following kinds of juvenile offences Incurability, which includes keeping late hours, disobedience, and so on. Truancy, which can be from home or school. Destruction of property, which includes both public and private property. Violence which is perpetrated against the community by using such means as knives and guns. Sex offenses which can range from homosexual activity to criminal assault and rape.

Eaton and Polk (1961, p.364) classified the delinquents by the following types of offences they have been involved in: Minor violations which include disorderly conduct and minor traffic violations. Property violations which include all property thefts except automobiles. Major traffic violations which include automobile theft and drunken-driving and any other offence that would involve an automobile. Human addiction which includes sex offenses as well as alcohol and drug addiction. Bodily harm which includes homicide offenses that involve sexual deviation, such as rape, and generally, all other acts of violence against a person.

Sellin and Wolfgang (1964, pp.3-25) also used the type of offence for classifying the delinquent behavior into two classes. Under class I they list: bodily or physical injury; property theft; and property damage. Under class II, they include the following: Intimidation. Property loss and property loss threatened. Primary victimization which is committed against a person. Secondary victimization which is committed against a commercial establishment. Tertiary victimization which includes offenses

against the public order and regulatory offenses such as violation of city ordinance. Mutual victimization which includes offenses that involve two individuals such as rape. No victimization which includes truancy.

Kvaraceus (1959, pp.96-105) classifies youngsters who become delinquent in relation to three major variables: The extent to which the individual engages in delinquent behavior. The degree of demonstrable emotional pathology. The individual’s social class.

There is no single cause or simple explanation for the development of delinquent behavior according to Healy and Bronner (1917, pp.72-79) the causes of juvenile delinquency are: Bad company, Adolescent instability and impulses, Early sex experience, Mental conflicts, Extreme social suggestibility, Love of adventure, Motion picture, School dissatisfaction, Poor recreation, Street life, Vocational dissatisfaction, Sudden impels, Physical conditions of all sorts.

Social factors-Family background is one of the most potent influences on juvenile development. Norms, values, models of behavior, and other imprints emanate from the family unit, and these factors create an internalized “blue-print” for the child personality, beliefs, and attitudes. When anti social and criminal norms exist within families, laypersons and experts agree that this can lead to one readily observable outcome: Criminal dysfunctional and deviant behaviors run in some families. For example, an association exists between marital instability and delinquency, so that the manifestations of a discordant marital environment such as stress, estrangement, coldness, and unhealthy boundaries produce a disproportionately high incidence of delinquent behavior in children who grow up in this environment.

1. Broken homes-The home may be broken up by death of one or both of the parents, or by prolonged illness, insanity, distortion or divorce. Interaction in home is a very important means for socializing the child. The mother plays vital role in this regard. If she divorces her husband or deserts him or dies, the growth of the child will be affected. Such a child loses not only mother’s love but also parental control and becomes an easy victim to the outside anti societal influence. It can’t, be said that broken home invariably leads to delinquent behavior and the part of the children.

2. Poverty-A very large proportion of delinquent children come from poor homes. It is generally, although not anonymously, accepted by professional students of juvenile delinquency that the vast majority of delinquents come from the lower class. Poverty compels sometimes

both of the parents to be outside the home for a very long period to earn their daily bread. The children will be uncared by them. Such children may consciously or unconsciously join hands with gangsters and become delinquents. This mostly happens in slum areas and areas in which mostly working class people live.

3. Delinquency areas.-It is said that some areas are highly vulnerable to delinquent trends. Long ago Cyril Burt (1925, pp.12-18) in his study showed that there are certain areas in London from which the majority of delinquent children come. The delinquents mostly come from areas of poor housing, overcrowding and the areas in which cinema houses, hotels, night clubs, liquor shops are found in a large number. It is true that when a family is living in the heart of the town the chances are greater for the children of such families to pick up delinquent behavior. It is to be noted that not all the children living in the delinquent areas are delinquents.

4. Companions and gangs.-Antisocial and criminal conduct by members of juvenile gangs is not a new phenomenon. Early immigrant groups arriving in this country frequently found themselves located in the worst slums of urban areas, and gangs soon emerged. As the child grows older he goes into the neighborhood and becomes a member of the play group or peer group. According to C.B.Mamoria (1965, p.278) wrote his book with the title "Social Problems and Social Dis-organization in India" stated that Charles Shaw has opined that "delinquency is a product of community forces". In cities, in slum areas peculiar social groups called 'gangs' are found. Generally the gang starts as a playgroup. In the absence of playground facilities, the children will start playing in streets and finally organize themselves into gangs. The gang has all the qualities, such as loyalty, co-operation, social solidarity and unity. These gangs are found to be associated with crime in all its aspects like delinquency, rioting, corrupt politics, and so on. Children coming from poor families and broken families easily become the victim of gangs.

5. Beggary.Beggary is often the cause of juvenile delinquency. Child beggars mostly come from either very poor families or broken homes. The children are betrayed of the needed love and affection of the parents. They crave for the satisfaction of their inner impulses, desires and ambitions. They choose to become beggars for the same. As beggars they get annoyed to see others enjoying life. Some of them may even become rebels. They realize that only through deviant practices, they

can satisfy their desires and meet their needs. They thus become delinquents. (Hirsh, N., 1937).

Other Socio- economic (or) environment factors Socio economic class.Past conventional wisdom held that children from poor and working class backgrounds that is, youth in to the "dangerous classes are much more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. Reasons for middle-class delinquency include parental pressure, peer pressure, uncertainty for the future, experimentation with intoxicating substances, experimenting with alternative lifestyles, and strong youth sub cultures.

1. School dissatisfaction.Some students get dissatisfied with school life. Parental irresponsibility, un-manageable student, teacher ratio, lack of entertainment and sports facilities in schools, indifference of the teachers may contribute to this. Such dissatisfied students become regular absentees in schools and start wandering in streets. They may even form gangs of their own and become gamblers, eve-teasers, pickpockets, drunkards, smokers and drug addicts.

2. Films and pornographic literature.It has also added to the magnitude of delinquency. Cinema, television and obscene literature may often provoke sexual and other impulse in adolescents. Hence they may start their 'adventure' in satisfying them in process of which they commit crimes.

3. Deep-seated inner desires.It coupled with outside pressures, compulsions and temptations also contribute to juvenile delinquency. For example, on hearing the interesting narration of the illicit sex experiences or such other criminal experiences from one's gang mate, one may be tempted to follow the same

Conclusion.Personal factors such as mental deficiency and emotional disturbances may also contribute to juvenile delinquency. 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. So many studies have revealed that is larger proportion of mentally defectives are in the delinquent group than among the normal children.

Mental troubles and emotional maladjustments are strong factors in delinquency. Emotional problems of inferiority, jealousy and being thwarted are very common among the delinquent children. According

to psychoanalytic view, the delinquent is an individual who is governed by the “pleasure principle”. He wants to get immediate pleasure and immediate satisfaction for his needs. So he becomes a victim to his own impulses. He is neither able to control his impulses nor able to imagine to think the consequences of his actions. It is also said that delinquent breakdown is an escape from emotional situation for some particular individual and family background. Some emotionally maladjusted children become delinquents to get the attention of their parental or as a protest against their treatment.

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