



THE LANTERN TRIBE

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THE WEIGHT OF CHANGE

From living together to living apart,
Our lives have completely transformed.
From craving junk food to savoring home-cooked meals,
Our tastes have dramatically reformed.
From playing in the street to scrolling through Insta,
Our interests have radically shifted.
From purest bonds to shallow friendships,
Our relationships have drifted.
From eight to eighteen and beyond,
The numbers have steadily climbed.
From small toys to great ambitions,
Our priorities have been redefined.
From being adults to longing for childhood,
Our desires have taken new forms.
Change, I understand, is the law of the world,
But tell me truly, why have our souls transformed.

GARIMA

1

INTRODUCTION



RUDRAKSHI BISHT

The 'Youth' is an important stakeholder in the society. Investing in youth ensures vibrant, dynamic, progressive society. Active participation and engagement from youth are key to addressing and combatting current challenges for building a better future. It has been proven that teaching children effectively is crucial for creating a better society as it provides for necessary foundational skills, positive behavior and social norms, civic engagements, and a healthy society with responsible individuals likely to contribute and benefit society as a whole. Unfortunately, the youth can be involved in Juvenile Delinquency which shatters the plan of a developing society.

Juvenile Delinquency is a legal term used in the modern world that refers to illegal or 'harmful' anti-social behavior by individuals under the legal age of 18. This behavior is termed as actions that can range from minor offenses like vandalism, loitering, truancy for illegal work, and participation with terror gangs to major offenses like theft, sexual assault, or drug-related activities and even engaging in murder.



In a progressing society, Juvenile Delinquency is one of the most serious problems of the society that hinders the growth of a society at large. This is not limited to a particular region, instead, is a universal problem. Juvenile Delinquency is a large variety of disapproved behavior of individuals under the age 18 which is socially disapproved of in the general public. Society suffers from juvenile delinquency in various ways- increased crime rates that lead to insecurity and fear, strained social services, disruption in education, costs incurred by the justice system in dealing with juvenile offenders, and legal proceedings. This largely has causes that rise from dysfunctional families, parental influence, peer pressure, socioeconomic factors, psychological factors, and influence of living in high-crime neighborhoods where criminal behavior is normalized and habitual.



Youth crime is a matter of concern. It is unfortunate that many young offenders are also victims of complex needs and therefore are forced to commit crime without any intention of doing it in the first place. A **‘Juvenile’ is an individual who commits a crime but is under the age of criminal majority. A ‘delinquent’ is an individual who has committed a criminal offense.** Juvenile delinquency is growing and is extensively used in everyday life. A feature of this is the rise of youth gangs. Delinquent offenses include acts that violate the legal structures of the state and limit future educational and employment opportunities. Furthermore, early involvement in criminal activities leads to a cycle of repeated offenses and deeper entrenchment in criminal ideology. Juvenile delinquency has evolved over time. The paradigm of dysfunctional family, media aspect, victims, and stigmas related to this alongwith preventive measures and successful rehabilitation programs are covered in the following topics of this article.



2

**THE ECONOMICS OF
CRIME:
UNDERSTANDING
THE RATIONAL AND
LOGICAL
DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS**

NEELA



Crime is often viewed as a rational and logical decision made by individuals, where the potential benefits of illegal activities are weighed against the risks and costs of getting caught. According to economists, if the perceived profit from crime exceeds the consequences of punishment, individuals are more likely to commit crimes (Eide, 2000). This theory is based on the rational and present-oriented models of crime, which emphasize the individual's choice between legal and illegal activities.

In contrast, radical political economic models highlight the political and socioeconomic factors that sustain crime, such as relative deprivation, poverty, inequality, unemployment, and class, all of which are interconnected. The economic model of crime suggests that for individuals on the margin of criminal activity, crime should be more attractive if it offers higher earnings than legitimate work and if its expected value, factoring in the risk of arrest and incarceration, exceeds that of legal employment.

The decision to commit a crime involves a cost-benefit analysis, where individuals weigh the benefits against the costs. **The costs of crime can be categorized into direct, indirect, and intangible costs.** Direct costs have a clear price, such as the cost of repairing vandalized property. Indirect costs, like reduced property values in crime-prone neighborhoods, are harder to quantify. Intangible costs include the fear, pain, and suffering experienced by victims and society.

Crime and the economy are closely linked. Economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, limited education, and low labor market skills contribute to higher crime rates. When legitimate employment offers low earnings, crime becomes a more attractive option, especially if it pays a higher wage than legal work. Improvements in economic conditions, such as lower unemployment and higher wages, can reduce crime. (Block and Heineke ,1975)

Addressing these issues requires a nuanced approach that integrates economic, behavioral, and systemic factors. The creation of black money, which often eludes police efforts, is a critical issue in crime prevention. The transformation of black money into white money, known as "social laundering," involves powerful individuals and organizations, making it difficult for law enforcement to track and prevent





In conclusion, the economics of crime is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive understanding of the rational and logical decision-making process involved in committing crimes. By addressing the economic, behavioral, and systemic factors that contribute to crime, policymakers can develop effective prevention strategies to reduce crime rates and improve public safety.

As Shri Abhiyanand, former DGP of Bihar, quotes, "Everyone has their own value of committing a crime & Power of criminals to commit crimes does not lie in the person, instead it lies in his assets and properties."

3

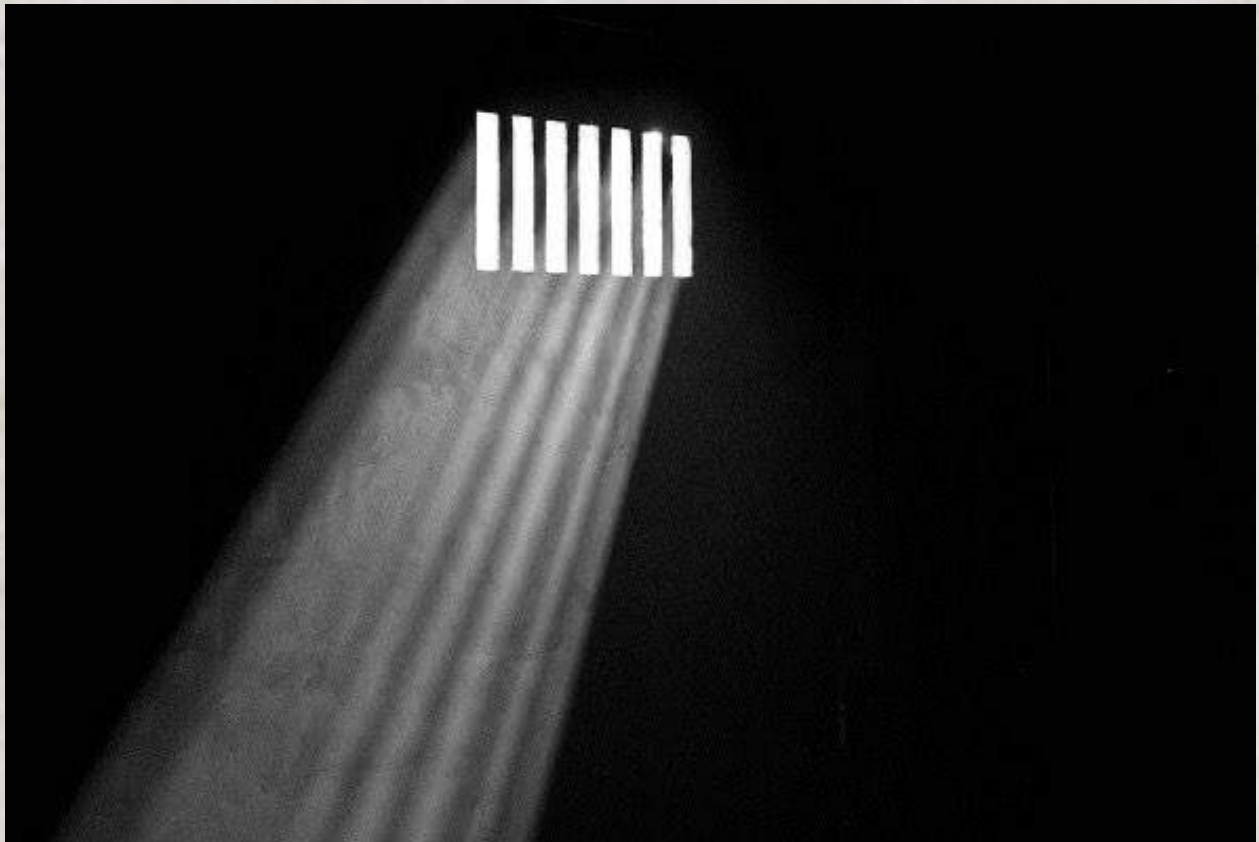
**NEW MORNING:
NURTURING CHILDREN
NOT PAROLEE**



**SAUBHAGYA
SRIVASTAVA**

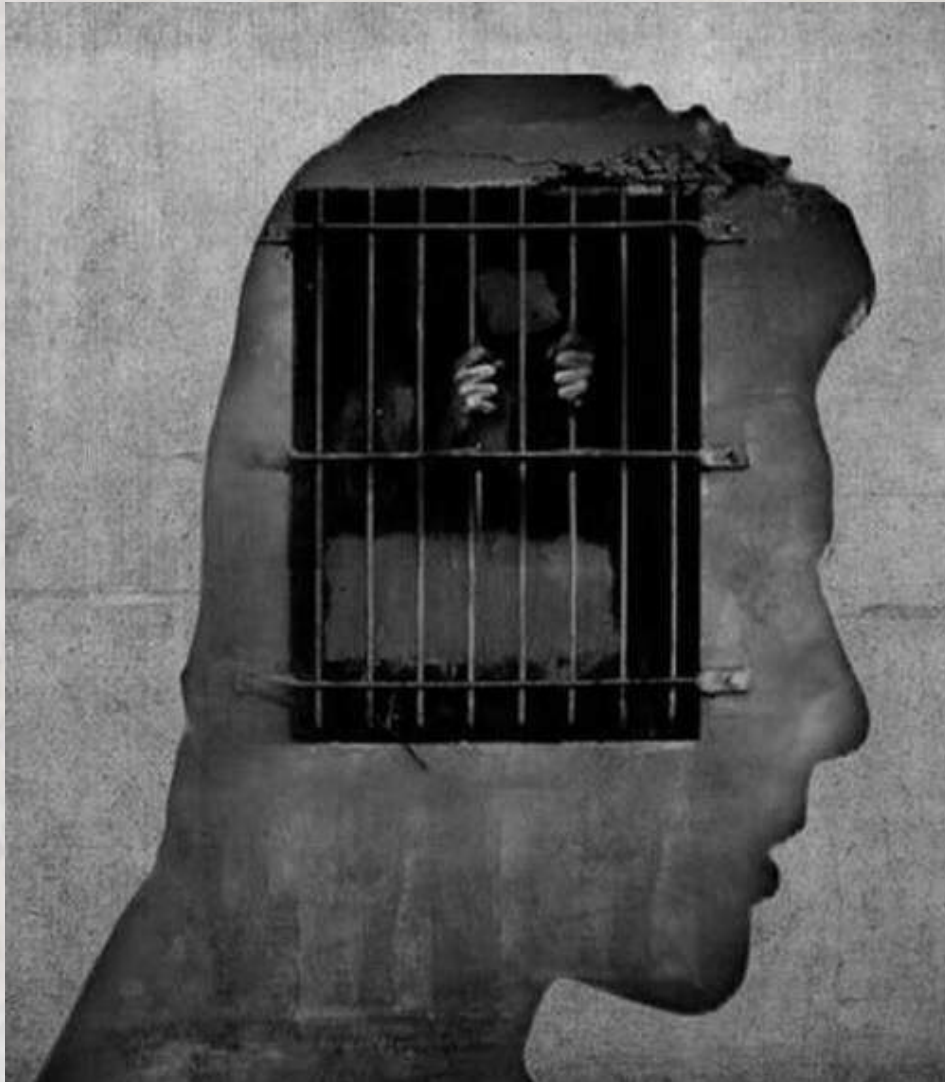
The juvenile delinquent does not feel his disturbed personality. The intelligent man does not feel his intelligence or the introvert his introversion."

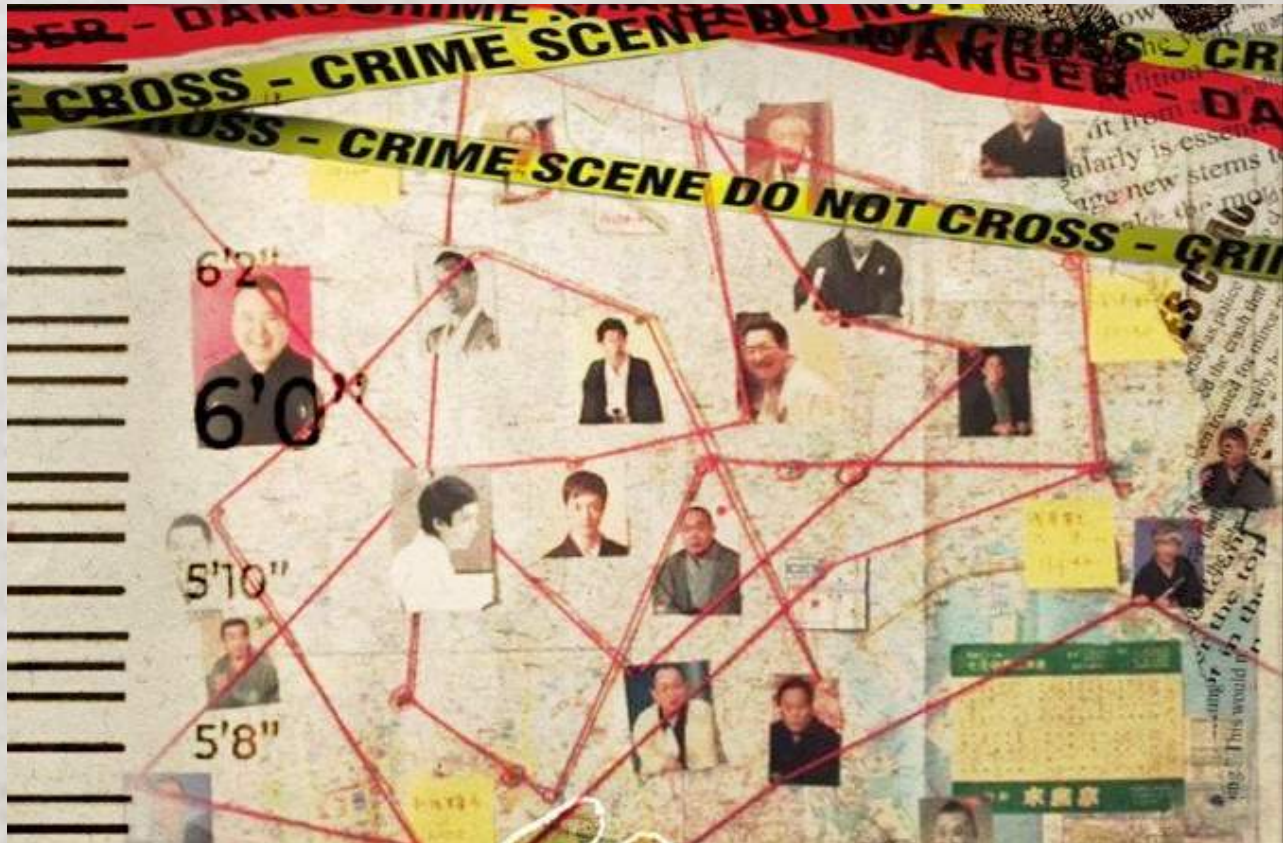
- B F Skinner



The question is where to draw the line and where to blur it. The question is should we treat juvenile delinquents as an individual with distinctive recidivism or as misguided teens who need schooling, reassurance, and love to break their cocoon to come out as more emotionally sound humans? Are they just children or criminals? Are we nurturing children or rehabilitating the prisoners?

The definition of a juvenile delinquent may vary from constitution to constitution or from border to border, the right to define and structure the framework for juvenile delinquents may be vested in the hands of policymakers and the responsibility to keep the system abreast with changing dynamics may be vested in the hands of legislator, lastly bridging the gap between legislators and justice is wielded by judiciary. Nonetheless, the onus for nurturing children and sound humans lies within us and it's a collective effort as a society to be able to draw and blur the lines.





Before delving deep into the kaleidoscopic nature of criminality, underpinned by restrictive traditions, clinical & complex enmesh of an individual's personality and criminogenic factors, let's look within and deconstruct to begin seeing humans as humans and children as clayey soil having high retention to absorb all the purity just as they have wide lens for absorbing impurities, however, it's the society who need to equip them with correct moulds.

juvenile crime in India as per the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**: between 2020 -2023, the number of crimes committed by juveniles/ the trend saw fluctuation (2020: 2,643 cases, 2021: 2,524 cases, 2022: 2,340 cases, 2023: 2,676) however the apprehenders were between the age group of 16 and 18 (2017 and 2022). Interestingly enough in 2023, Delhi had more than 2,340 cases against minors, ranking it sixth on the list.

The basic human need is to be loved, acknowledged, and respected and to have a social standing, which is time and again tested, felt and supported by empirical data. Oddly enough even after public discourse where we are lacking so much that we fail to raise children with a correct set of morals? There can be an array of possible solutions to deal with juvenile probationers such as facilitating intensive therapy & counselling, correct infrastructure, policy, human resource and punitive systems to be reviewed to keep it at par with the inevitable evolving of aspirations and needs. However, without generosity and conscience are we really improving?

Well, some things should end with questions for more robust answers to emanate from those dark and gloomy creaks.

4

**THE PARADIGM OF
DYSFUNCTIONAL
FAMILY AND CRIME**



ASHLY JOSSY

Juvenile delinquency, also known as 'juvenile offending,' refers to illegal behavior or activities committed by minors, typically between the ages of 10 and 17. While numerous factors contribute to such behavior, the structure and stability of the family are considered key predictors of delinquency. Scholars have long argued that the quality of family relationships, including parental guidance, socioeconomic conditions, and exposure to conflict, significantly influences a young person's behavior. A lack of supportive family dynamics can increase the risk of delinquent behavior, whereas a stable and nurturing family environment tends to mitigate it.



Children raised in functional families benefit from an environment characterized by love, care, and safety, which supports their psychosocial and emotional development. This foundation not only helps them navigate physical, social, and emotional challenges more effectively but also has a lasting impact on their mental well-being as they transition into adulthood. Conversely, children from dysfunctional families often experience aggression, a lack of affection, and sometimes violence or threats. This exposure can severely affect their mental and emotional well-being, leading them to cope with the chaotic and unstable behaviors of their parents.

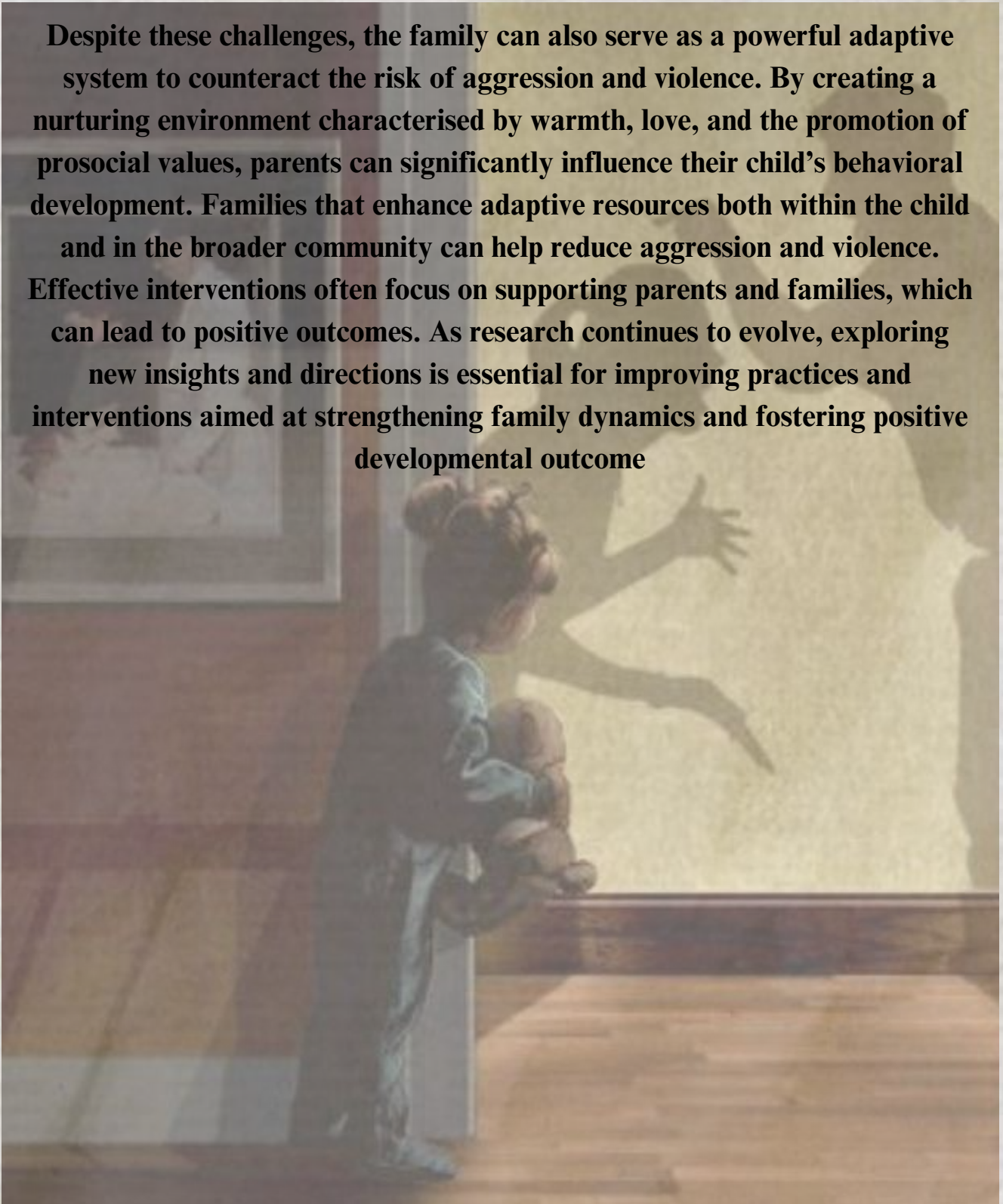
Moreover, children from dysfunctional families may face stigma from their peers due to their home environment, which can increase the likelihood of withdrawal and isolation both within the family and among friends. The emotional trauma resulting from such environments can contribute to the development of mental health issues. Research shows that parental divorce also significantly impacts juvenile delinquency. For instance, a study by Wadsworth, Maclean, Kuh, and Rodgers (1990) found a link between parental divorce during childhood and increased behavioral problems and delinquency by age 21.

Interdisciplinary research underscores that family violence is a significant risk factor for juvenile delinquency and antisocial behavior. Recognized as a national public health concern, family violence poses immediate health and safety risks to victims and has extensive effects on youth development. Exposure to prevalent violence within families—whether perpetrated by parents, siblings, or relatives—can normalise aggression and violent actions, leading children to view such behavior as acceptable.



Family-based risks can even begin before birth, involving both genetic and epigenetic factors. Contextual stressors, such as poverty and conflict, can impact development either directly or indirectly by disrupting parenting behaviors. These disruptions, including increased negativity, reduced warmth, and exposure to violence, can further influence the psychosocial development of children.

Despite these challenges, the family can also serve as a powerful adaptive system to counteract the risk of aggression and violence. By creating a nurturing environment characterised by warmth, love, and the promotion of prosocial values, parents can significantly influence their child’s behavioral development. Families that enhance adaptive resources both within the child and in the broader community can help reduce aggression and violence. Effective interventions often focus on supporting parents and families, which can lead to positive outcomes. As research continues to evolve, exploring new insights and directions is essential for improving practices and interventions aimed at strengthening family dynamics and fostering positive developmental outcome



5

**FOUR WALLS-
PRISON, HOME
AND
REHABILITATION**

AARATHI DEEPU

The issue of juvenile delinquency is a serious social concern that affects the individuals affected as well as the communities in which they live. Because juvenile engagement in criminal activity is so common, it is imperative that effective treatments be developed with the goal of rehabilitating young offenders, lowering recidivism rates, and eventually promoting beneficial long-term outcomes. Juvenile rehabilitation programs have been a centre of attention for juvenile justice research, policy, and practice as a result of this need. Through a review of the literature, this research aims to shed light on the elements that make rehabilitation programs effective as well as the issues that need to be resolved to increase their effectiveness. A more comprehensive knowledge of the larger picture of juvenile rehabilitation will result from the investigation of different program components, the impact of risk and protective variables, and the challenges associated with measuring long-term results.





In light of the various program designs, participant profiles, and as rehabilitation ideas evolve, this essay will critically evaluate the data pertaining to the efficacy of programs for juvenile rehabilitation. It will also emphasise the significance of taking into account both the immediate results of the program and its long-term impacts after the intervention time frame.

The difficult task of steering young offenders away from criminal paths and towards productive, law-abiding lives is addressed by juvenile rehabilitation programs. These programs, which emphasise rehabilitation over punishment, depart from adult criminal justice techniques because they are based on the understanding that adolescents are still going through a period of mental and emotional development.

These programs, which frequently include therapy, education, counselling, and job training, are designed to treat the root reasons of delinquent behaviour. The origins of these programs may be found in the late 19th-century creation of the juvenile justice system, which at first sought to assist and counsel young offenders rather than just punish them severely. Approaches have changed over time in response to shifting social views and advancements in psychology.

Programs for juvenile rehabilitation include a wide range of elements and layouts that are specifically designed to meet the unique requirements of young offenders. These elements and layouts are carefully planned to support individual development, the enhancement of skills, and the modification of behaviour in order to reduce the likelihood of recidivism and to encourage favourable long-term results. Cognitive-behavioural therapy, which attacks faulty thought processes and promotes prosocial actions, is one similar element. Another important component is education, which offers individuals instruction in life skills and academic help to improve their prospects for the future.



These programs, which frequently include therapy, education, counselling, and job training, are designed to treat the root reasons of delinquent behaviour. The origins of these programs may be found in the late 19th-century creation of the juvenile justice system, which at first sought to assist and counsel young offenders rather than just punish them severely. Approaches have changed over time in response to shifting social views and advancements in psychology. By giving young people marketable skills, vocational training lowers their risk of relapsing into criminal activity. Family-based treatments put a lot of emphasis on mending family ties because they understand



how important it might be for rehabilitation to be successful to have strong family support. By encouraging criminals to accept responsibility for their crimes, restorative justice techniques promote compassion and understanding. Multidisciplinary methods target the underlying causes of delinquency by integrating counselling, substance addiction treatment, and mental health care. Program ideas range from non-residential treatments incorporating frequent community participation to residential institutions with set routines. Effectiveness is increased by customising these designs to fit unique requirements, cultural contexts, and risk profiles. The long-term effects rehabilitation are maintained by the integration of mentorship, follow-up services, and positive reinforcement.

Although India's juvenile offender rehabilitation programs seek to improve outcomes and lower recidivism, they are not without obstacles and constraints that may restrict their efficacy. The main obstacles and restrictions that come with putting rehabilitation programs into practice and assessing their effectiveness in the Indian setting are covered in this section. The little funding provided to rehabilitation programs is one major issue. Inadequate finance has the potential to restrict the extent and calibre of interventions, resulting in overcrowded facilities, understaffed facilities, and restricted availability of essential resources including mental health treatments, vocational training equipment, and educational materials. There are several obstacles because of the poor facilities and infrastructure for restoration. Numerous rehabilitation institutions are devoid of workshops for vocational training, age-appropriate living quarters for distinct age groups, leisure areas, and suitable physical spaces.

Therefore, maintaining favourable trajectories requires access to education and work opportunities, mentorship, and appropriate aftercare. Since early intervention and customised strategies that address mental health concerns, drug misuse, and family dynamics greatly contribute to program success, the significance of risk and protective variables should not be undervalued. Programs for juvenile rehabilitation offer a viable means of lowering recidivism rates and promoting favourable long-term results for young offenders. Stakeholders may work together to increase the effectiveness of these initiatives by using evidence-based practices, customised strategies, and knowledge of the difficulties involved.

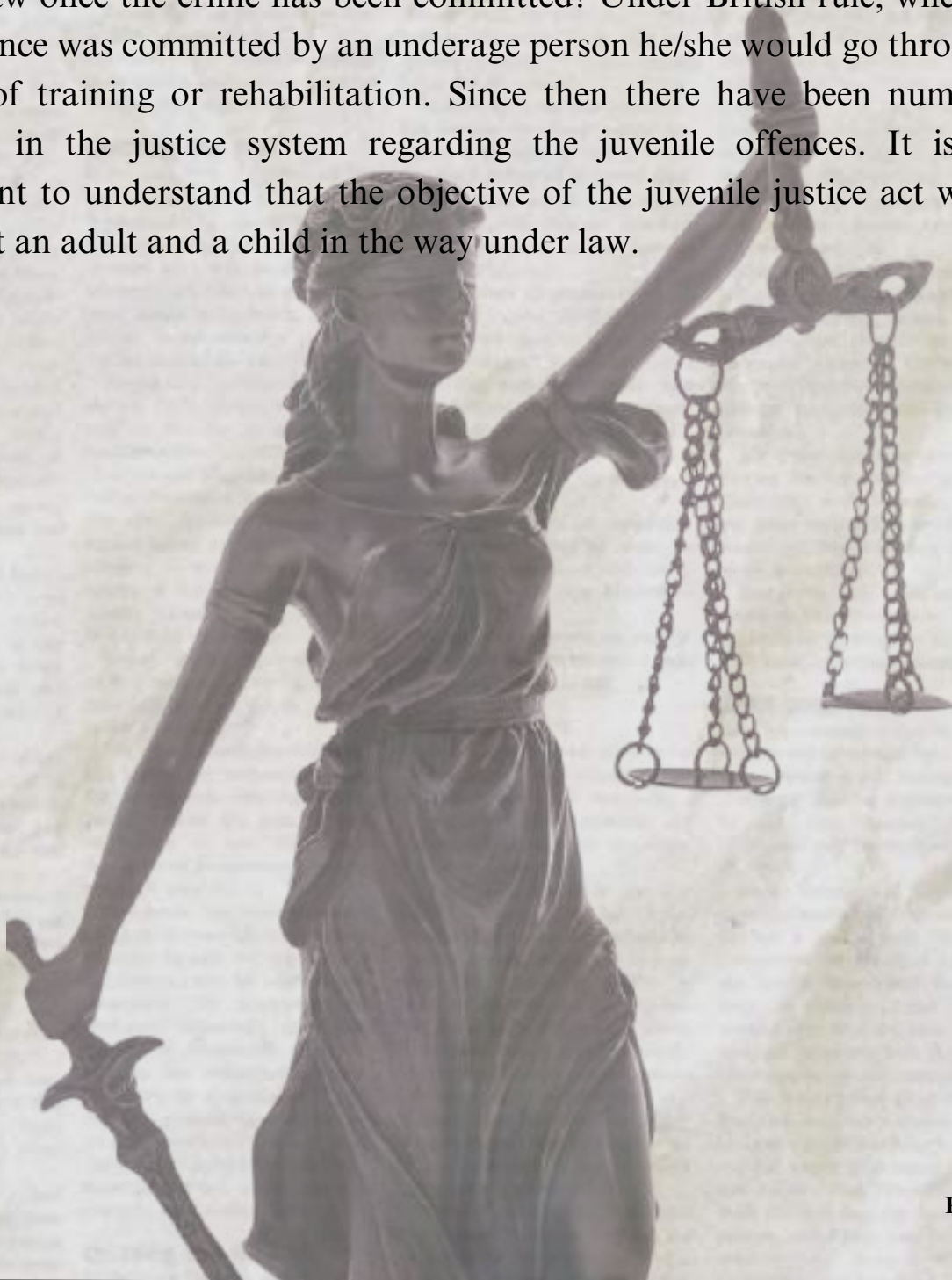
6

**LEGAL ASPECTS OF
JUVENILE
DELIQUENCY**



AARATHI DEEPU

Juvenile delinquency or juvenile offending is a term by the law which refers to participation in unlawful behavior committed by an individual who is younger than the age of maturity. There are reasons such as poverty which might make a child commit a particular crime. But what happens in the eyes of the law once the crime has been committed? Under British rule, whenever any offence was committed by an underage person he/she would go through a course of training or rehabilitation. Since then there have been numerous changes in the justice system regarding the juvenile offences. It is also important to understand that the objective of the juvenile justice act was to not treat an adult and a child in the way under law.





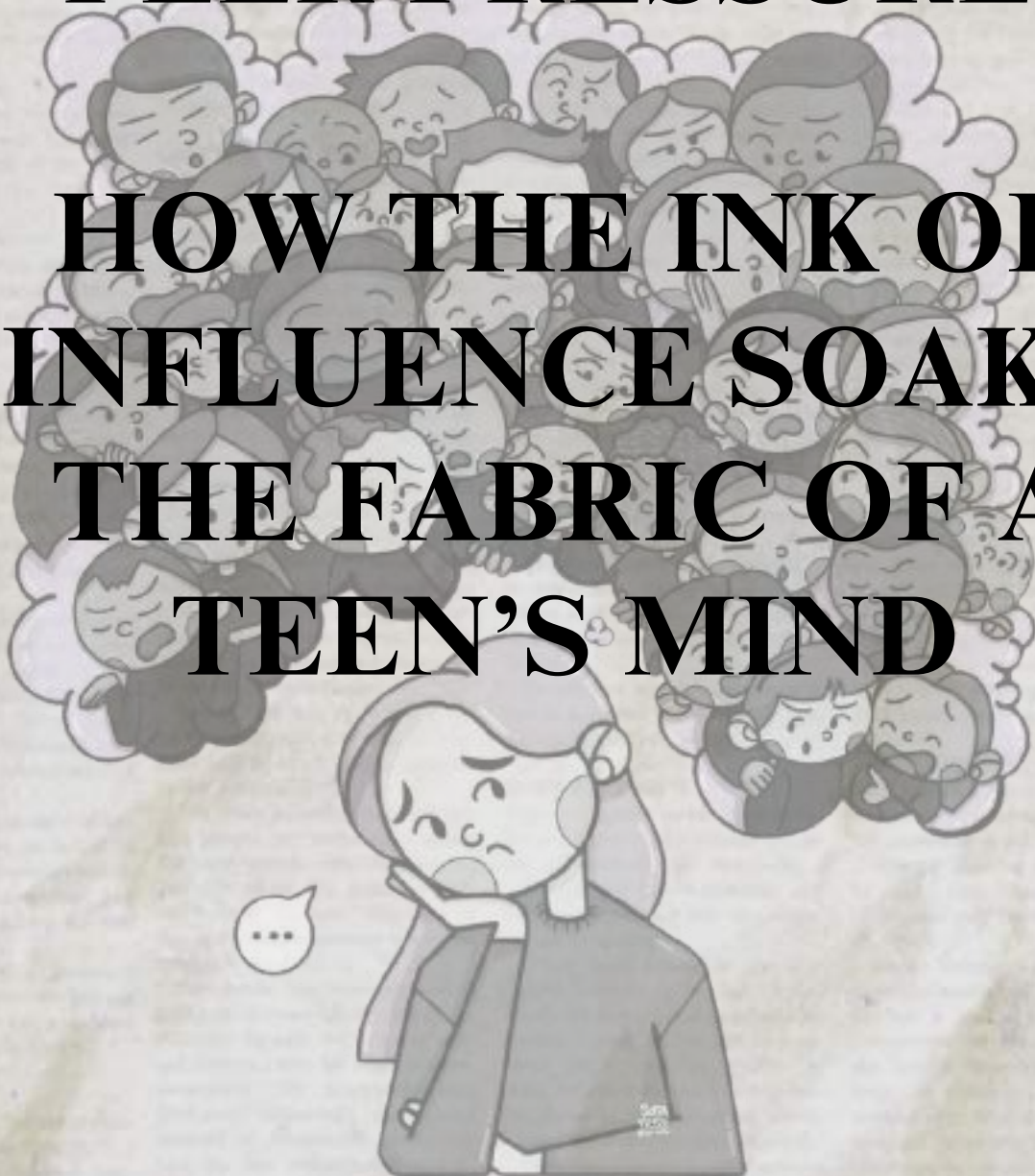
The Juvenile Justice act 1986 serves as the foundation stone for juvenile justice in India. But the latest act through which punishments are considered is the Juvenile Justice Act,2015. The need for the change in came after the Delhi Gang Rape in which one of the accused was a minor which shocked the whole country. One of the most important changes that this act brought was “Child in conflict with law” this says that any person within the age of 16-18 who commits a heinous crime can be treated and tried as an adult and will not get any special positions that would be enjoyed by a minor. Another important aspect of Juvenile Justices Act, 2015 is that any minor offender who has been a victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect will be given mandatory care through specialised homes which work as rehabilitation for them. During the trial of a minor, this act has also made it necessary that the trial be shown in child friendly manner and there should be proper focus on education, vocational training and mental health support provided, which will be taken care off by the children welfare committees established for children in need of care and protection. Similar to an adult, a minor also has full entitlement to appoint a lawyer and if it cannot appoint a lawyer by itself then the government will provide them a lawyer.

There have been challenges with this act such as since this act was created with the main aim of rehabilitation and treatment of the child to be welcomed in the society there has been lack of training personnel to take care of this issue and not only that but delay in judicial proceedings also take a lot of time which creates a toll on the mental health of the child. Addressing the challenges are crucial to ensure the objectives of rehabilitation and protection are fully realized.



7

**PEER PRESSURE:
HOW THE INK OF
INFLUENCE SOAKS
THE FABRIC OF A
TEEN'S MIND**



VAANCHHIT

Peer pressure, a significant social force that drastically determines the behaviour of young individuals, especially during their teen years, a crucial period for personal growth and self-identity. It's the influence exerted by peers that motivates someone to change their attitudes, values, or behaviors to be similar to the others. Teens are relatively very vulnerable to peer pressure as they are self-discovering their own identity and generally wish to be part of a group or a friend. Pressure can be expressed in several ways, ranging from direct requests to the less obvious ones, which teenagers may be unaware of. While at times peer influence can indirectly promote the good of society, for example, study of good results in school and active participation in the community, it often is the vehicle for various harmful behaviours like drug use and criminal activities.



For young people in a bitter home context, the attraction of meeting some bad peers can be particularly strong. Children from dysfunctional families that are seeking support and connection often find themselves in groups that lead to delinquent activities, such as begging mafias. Initially, the outfits appear to be sympathetic, and many of the young people who are there are lured in because they are having a tough time and just want to get away. Over time, they get caught in the loop of being exploited and engaging in crimes.



Real cases show how the process works. Some cities have organized crime syndicates that draw young people into the practice of begging. Initially, they are offered help or companionship, but after the initial association, they are then forced into illegal activities. Moreover, the adolescents who hang around with friends who are drug users are likely to become drug addicts as well, as the stress to be fit in can cause not only harmful health issues but also can lead to legal problems. Joining gangs is another example, where most of the youth are lured in by the concept of protection, identity, or even speedy cash. While it may appear to be a support group in the beginning, it regularly turns into a life filled with the likes of violence, crime, and the possibility of going to jail.



Being peer-pressured is tricky and can have both positive (in rare cases with a healthy competitive environment) and negative impacts. It is essential for guardians, instructors, and administrators to have a good grasp of it in order to build up environments that are more conducive to healthy relationships. Through addressing those underlying factors that pull kids toward these groups, society can direct them to healthy, more positive choices. Just as a gardener removes the weeds for flowers to thrive, we need to establish environments where young individuals can prosper and excel without having their development impeded by negative peer pressure.

8

**CENTRES FOR
JUVENILE DETENTION**

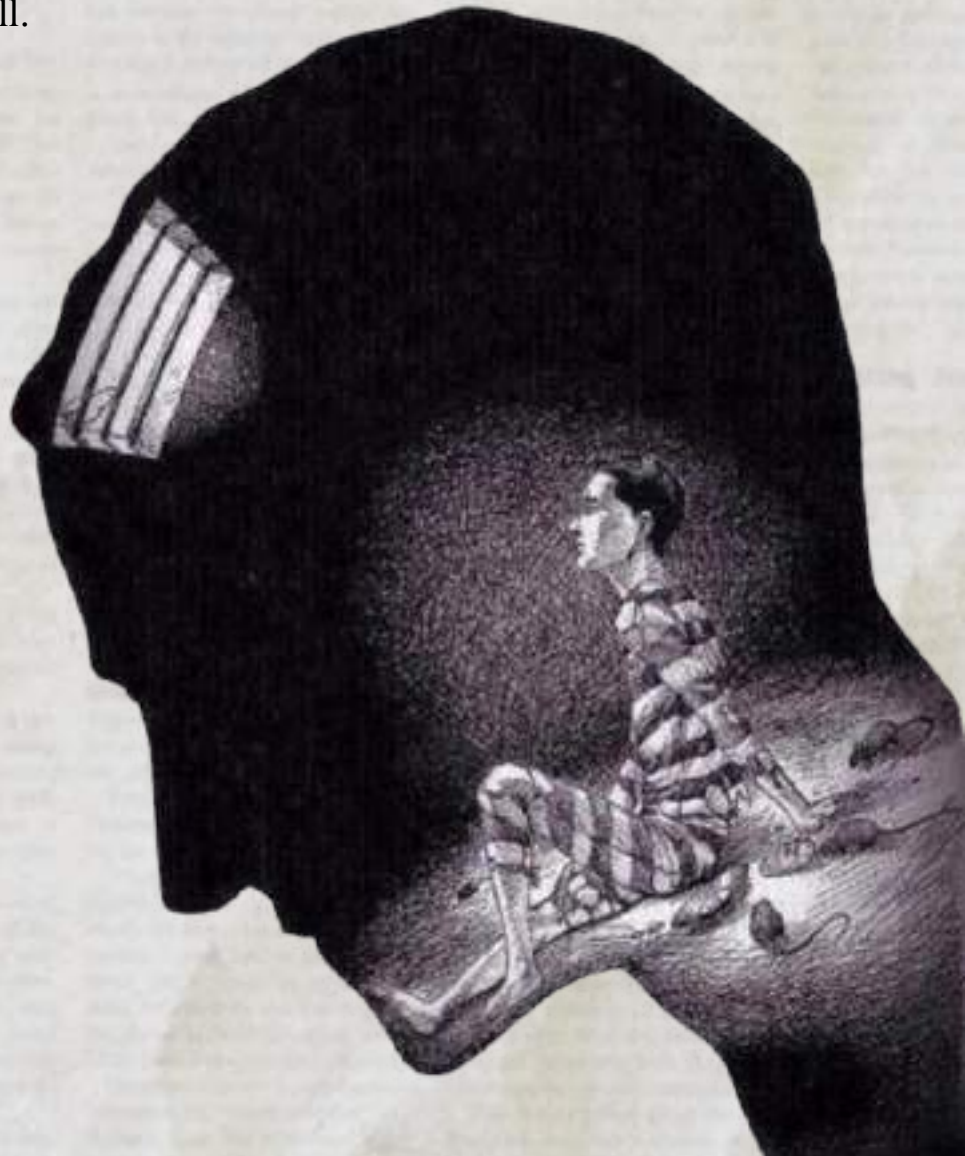


VAANCHHIT

Juvenile Correctional Centres, also synonymous with juvenile homes and youth detention centres have been existing in our country for more than 23 years now. Designed to critically serve the detention of people under the age of minority involved in heinous offences, these juvenile centres target to revamp a minor, offering them a second chance to be responsible citizens. Thoughtfully integrated as a significant system, these centres aim to treat children distinctly from the adults, taking into consideration their wisdom and their easily-influential-will.



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Although detained for short periods, this custody caters to education, health, counselling, and rehabilitation of the minor. The sheer purpose of youth homes is not punishment rather an effort towards psychological shift of the accused. However, the systems of India do not allow this to fully be true to this. Centres house more children than their capacity allows and struggle with imparting the required education, change, and care. Broken computers, non-functional cameras, damaged board games, all point to a notable ineffectiveness in the system. Requests of repairs from the superintendents of these homes stay pending for as long as one can imagine, despite a significant budget allocation towards juvenile centres. A closer look at the juvenile homes grant us to feel the misery upon those targeted to be rehabilitated into being indirectly mentally suffering because of the external conditions and the contradictory elements.



Despite the challenges, there are stories of a few successful potent centres. A study by the Asian Centre of Human Rights stated 733 such homes getting assistance from the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2012. Some centres have successfully implemented authentic sessions of complete psychological care; yoga sessions; art therapy etc. Promising their purpose.

While India still fantasies to go beyond a glamorous future, it deeply requires to correct its fundamentals, of which one important part is the youth. Detention centres clearly require a transmogrification, an overnight evolution to protect the potential of juveniles who seek assistance and are accused of acts that could be rectified for their future as well as that of the country. Youths being detained in jails; the police not following the rules by threatening the juveniles; physically poor condition of the centres; inadequate & untrained staff; and deeper issues put forward a question on the judicial system and the functioning authorities of the future.

Concludingly, while juvenile centres need significant reforms, it is also the system and politics that must allocate the responsibilities accurately. Issues such as overcrowding; lack of staff training; and substandard education are essential to be addressed and rectified for an efficient functioning of Juvenile Detention Centres. The essence of juvenile justice lie in the hands of its orderly and well-run structure and the protection of youth.

9

**THE CHANGING
FACE OF
JUVENILE CRIME**



MR. THAYANITHI C.A

The rapid advancement of technology has dramatically reshaped juvenile crime, presenting new challenges and opportunities for both law enforcement and society. As technology, including the internet, smartphones, and social media, becomes increasingly embedded in young people's lives, it has fostered new forms of delinquency alongside modifications in traditional criminal activities. This article explores how technology influences juvenile crime, examines the role of socioeconomic factors, and highlights the intersection of mental health with delinquent behaviour.



The Technological Dimension of Juvenile Crime

The advent of digital technology has introduced novel avenues for juvenile crime. With a significant portion of young people engaging heavily in social media and online platforms, new forms of criminal activity have emerged. For instance, a study indicates that 81% of children aged 8-16 in India are active on social media, compared to 70% in the US and Singapore [1]. This pervasive online presence has led to the rise of cybercrime and online bullying among juveniles. Cyberbullying, which involves using digital media to spread false, embarrassing, or hostile information about others, has become a major concern [2]. Similarly, "sexting," the practice of sending explicit photographs or messages via digital devices, poses serious legal and psychological risks for young offenders [3]. These activities not only have legal ramifications but also impact the mental well-being of those involved.





Socioeconomic Influences on Juvenile Delinquency

Socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in shaping juvenile delinquency. Research shows that children from low-income families are at a higher risk of engaging in criminal activities. A study found that children from the lowest income quintile are seven times more likely to be convicted of violent crimes compared to their peers from higher income brackets [6]. Poverty often leads to negative psychosocial outcomes, such as poor self-esteem and antisocial behaviour, increasing the likelihood of criminal activities [7]. Education is another significant factor. School failure or dropout is linked to a high percentage of juvenile and adult criminal behaviour [8]. Schools provide essential opportunities for children to succeed and contribute positively to their communities, which can help mitigate the risk of delinquency.

The Role of Mental Health in Juvenile Crime

Mental health issues are prevalent among youth in the juvenile justice system. Studies reveal that approximately two-thirds of juveniles in detention or correctional settings have at least one diagnosable mental health problem, a rate far exceeding the 9-22% found in the general youth population [9]. Common diagnoses include substance use disorders, anxiety disorders, ADHD, and mood disorders [9]. For instance, the Pathways to Desistance study highlights that substance use disorder is the most common mental health issue among juvenile offenders, affecting 76% of participants. Other prevalent conditions include high levels of anxiety (33%), ADHD (14%), depression (12%), and post traumatic stress disorder (12%) [9].

Addressing the Challenges and Leveraging Technology

The convergence of technology and juvenile crime has introduced new challenges, such as the rise of cybercrime and online bullying, which require innovative responses from law enforcement. However, technology also offers solutions. Juvenile courts and law enforcement agencies are increasingly employing artificial intelligence and predictive policing to address delinquency more effectively. In the Indian context, the rapid rise in social media use among juveniles highlights the need for enhanced digital literacy and awareness programs. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates technological tools, socioeconomic support, and mental health interventions.

Conclusion

The impact of technology on juvenile crime is multifaceted, with new forms of delinquency emerging alongside traditional issues. Socioeconomic factors and mental health are critical in understanding and addressing juvenile crime. Effective prevention and intervention strategies must integrate technological, economic, and psychological considerations to combat the evolving landscape of juvenile delinquency.



10

**UNDERSTANDING
LONG-TERM
IMPACTS:**

**STIGMA OF
JUVENILE
RECORDS**

MR. THAYANITHI C.A

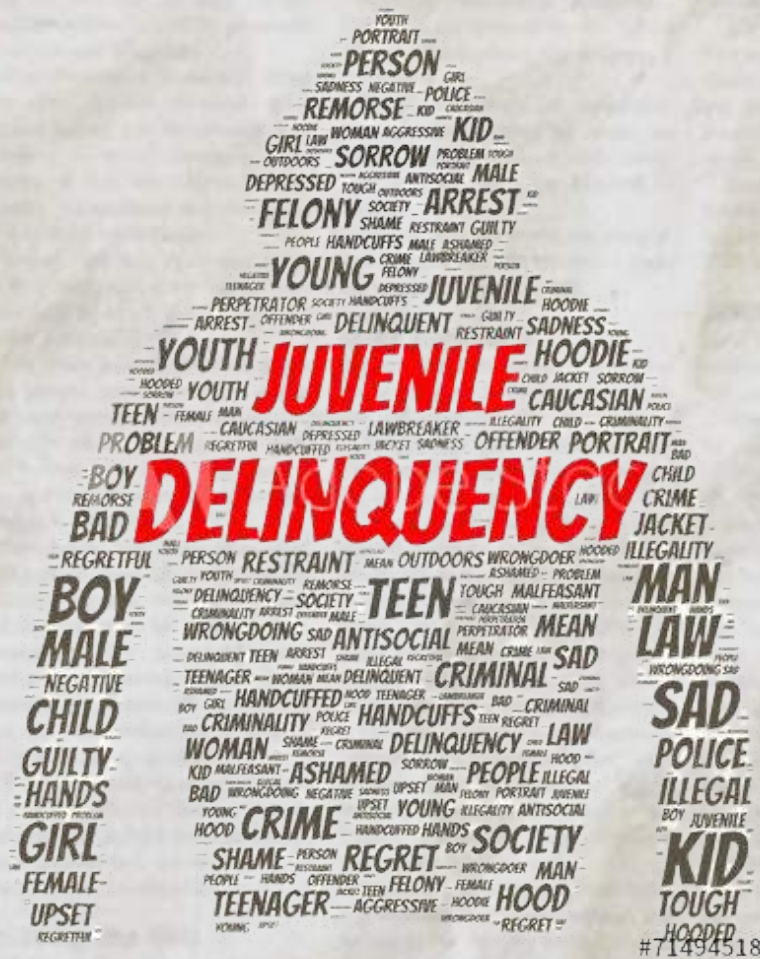
Juvenile records are official documents detailing a minor's interactions with the criminal justice system. Designed to be confidential, these records aim to safeguard the privacy of young individuals and promote their rehabilitation and reintegration into society [1]. Unlike adult criminal courts, which focus on punishment, the juvenile justice system emphasizes rehabilitating minors rather than penalizing them [2].

In India, the handling of juvenile records and the stigma associated with them have significant implications for young people's futures. Access to these records is typically restricted to parents, guardians, law enforcement, school authorities, and legal representatives [2]. Certain exceptions may allow law enforcement or social service providers to access them under specific circumstances [1]. Yet, the balance between maintaining confidentiality and addressing public safety concerns remains a contentious issue [2].



Stigma and Social Impact

The stigma attached to juvenile records can have severe repercussions on individuals' lives. This stigma often manifests as shame, embarrassment, and social exclusion, impacting self-esteem and social interactions [3]. In India, where societal norms and pressures are particularly pronounced, this stigma can be even more damaging. Juvenile records can severely hinder educational and employment opportunities, as background checks by educational institutions and employers can raise concerns about a candidate's past [4]. For instance, in a 2023 survey by the Indian Youth Justice Network, 62% of juveniles with records reported difficulties in finding stable employment due to their past [4]. The difficulty in securing stable employment due to a criminal record has long-term implications for an individual's overall quality of life [4].



Case Study: The Delhi Gang Rape Incident

A notable example in India is the case of the 2012 Delhi gang rape, where one of the accused was a juvenile. Despite his involvement in a heinous crime, the Juvenile Justice Board's decision to treat him under juvenile law rather than adult law sparked widespread debate and criticism. This case highlighted how juvenile records can perpetuate stigma and complicate reintegration into society [3]. The public's reaction often reflects a broader discomfort with the idea of rehabilitating young offenders, which can lead to further marginalization of those who have been involved in criminal activities at a young age.

The Labeling Theory

The labeling theory suggests that interactions with the justice system can lead to negative social labels such as "delinquent" or "offender," which can further entrench the individual's status and hinder their reintegration into society [5]. This stigma can result in exclusion from social institutions and contribute to a cycle of reoffending, as individuals internalize these labels and struggle with diminished self-worth [5]

Rehabilitation and Legal Reforms

In addressing the stigma of juvenile records, a multifaceted approach is essential. This includes balancing public safety with protecting child rights and fostering rehabilitation. The Indian juvenile justice system has made strides in this direction, with efforts to improve rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. For example, recent amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act aim to enhance the focus on rehabilitation and reintegration, while also setting clearer guidelines for handling serious offenses [2]. However, ongoing challenges remain, including societal attitudes that may impede the effectiveness of these reforms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the stigma attached to juvenile records has far-reaching consequences, significantly impacting young individuals' educational and employment opportunities and overall well-being. Despite the juvenile justice system's focus on rehabilitation and reintegration, societal attitudes often undermine these efforts by perpetuating stigma and creating barriers for young people trying to move past their past mistakes. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening support systems for rehabilitation, combating societal stigma, and reevaluating how society perceives and treats juveniles in conflict with the law. By fostering an environment that offers genuine opportunities for second chances and prioritizes constructive reintegration, we can break the cycle of stigmatization and empower young individuals to build positive and successful futures.

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