

Juvenile delinquency: Psychosocial Issues and Challenges

¹Ms. Bontha Kavya & ²Dr. Vismita Paliwal

¹PG Student, Department of Psychology, NIMS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan (India)

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, NIMS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 25 May 2019

Keywords

juvenile delinquents, psychosocial, issues, challenges.

*Corresponding Author

Email: vismitapaliwal[at]gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquents have a two to threefold risk of becoming tomorrow's serious, violent, and chronic offenders. The main purpose of the present study is to analyze the issues and challenge faced by the various types of juvenile delinquents in India. The secondary data was gathered from latest literature available on this subject including research journals, books, annual reports of health organizations and other surveys conducted by relevant authorities. The data gathered was analyzed and selected literature was taken into account in order to assess the major challenges faced by the children who are in the category of the three types of juvenile delinquents psychologically. Findings suggested that intervention programs, awareness seminars and new counselling techniques must be devised in order to deal with such issues and challenges faced by juvenile delinquents in order to mainstream them. It was concluded that there are some major psychosocial issues and challenges faced by the juvenile delinquents of India which require immediate attention. Some steps must be carried out for the enhancement of mental health and well-being of such children.

1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquents have a two to threefold risk of becoming tomorrow's serious, violent, and chronic offenders. Child delinquents also tend to have longer delinquency careers than do those with a later onset of offending. For these reasons alone, child delinquents constitute a disproportionate threat to the safety and property of citizens across the nation. The main aim of this research is to give advance knowledge about child delinquents and to address factors that contribute to offending starting at an early age, and show what types of interventions are effective, their levels of psychosocial variables. In few countries they define child delinquents as children ages 7 to 12 years who have committed delinquent acts. Three major types of delinquents acknowledged are as follows:

1. Serious child delinquents who have committed one or more of the following acts: homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and serious arson.
2. Other child delinquents (excluding serious delinquents and status offenders).
3. Children showing persistent disruptive behavior (including status offenses) who are at risk for offending.

Impulsivity holds a central place in many theories of child development and psychopathology. Although there are no widely adopted or precise definitions of "impulsivity," several behaviors or inferred processes are commonly used to define this term. These include:

- The tendency to execute actions too quickly or in an unreasoned or unreflective manner;
- Difficulties in withholding actions or difficulties in inhibiting actions once they have been commenced; and
- The tendency to seek out immediate identification at the expense of longer-term goals (Schachar, 1993).

One classic study on this hypothesis was conducted on children by Mallick and McCandless (1966). In this research, two groups of children were frustrated. Subsequently, one group (the "catharsis group") was allowed to play aggressively, whereas a second group (the "non-catharsis group") was given no chance to drain off their aggressiveness. Later, children in both groups were allowed to aggress toward the source of their frustration. In this case, children in the catharsis group were no less likely to aggress toward the source of their frustration than were children in the non-catharsis group, thus casting doubt on the validity of the cathartic hypothesis. Subsequent tests of this hypothesis have been conducted with both children and adults. In general, the results of such research not only support the original Mallick and McCandless (1966) results, but often also indicate that participants who are allowed to "vent their anger" subsequently become even more aggressive than those not given this opportunity (Tavris, 1982). Venting one's anger seems to have the effect of allowing the person to practice aggressiveness, thus becoming more likely to exhibit aggression in the future.

2. Review of literature

Kras (2018) studied that staff commitment to agency goals is important in juvenile justice settings, where the mission oscillates between the often-competing goals of rehabilitating youth and punishing them. Although prior research considers how staff characteristics relate to commitment to, and/or cynicism about, criminal justice organizations, less work examines these relationships in juvenile justice settings, and even less examines the effects of staff attitudes toward punishment. The current study assesses the influence of rehabilitative and punitive attitudes on organizational commitment and cynicism in a juvenile justice agency ($n = 204$). Multilevel analyses evaluating staff members within organizational units reveal that staff holding more traditional (punitive) attitudes are significantly and positively associated with cynicism, whereas staff holding rehabilitative values

demonstrate greater commitment to the agency. Findings suggest attitudes toward punishment play an important role in staff commitment to, and cynicism about, justice organizations, which may affect workers' adherence to organizational policies and goals.

Steketee(2019) analyzed surveys completed by 57,892 students who were 12 to 16 years old from 25 countries as part of the International Self-Report Delinquency Study (ISR3). Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to test the direct and indirect effects of child maltreatment and inter-parental violence on self-reported violent delinquency. Mediating effects are proposed for attachment to parents, parental social control (measured by parental knowledge, parental monitoring, and child disclosure), and parental moral authority. Analysis suggests direct effects of child maltreatment and inter-parental violence, as well as mediating effects of parental monitoring, parental knowledge, and parental moral authority. Child disclosure and attachment to parents do not affect violent juvenile offending. Being a victim of both child maltreatment and inter-parental violence is found to exacerbate the effect on violent offending. The results support the cross-national generalizability of the "cycle of violence" argument that children tend to reproduce the behavior of their parents.

McGauran(2019) compared the influence of parentification, attachment style (avoidant or anxious) and emotional resilience on adulthood antisocial behaviour in an offender and normative sample. Of the 137 participants in this study, 66 were supervised by the National Probation Service (age $M = 36.90$, $SD = 13.91$), and 71 were recruited from community-dwelling and student populations (age $M = 31.83$, $SD = 13.25$). In partial support of the predictions, participants in the offender group reported significantly greater levels of attachment anxiety compared to the normative group. However, emotional resilience was positively associated with antisociality in the normative sample. This small-scale investigation indicates value in exploring these specific variables in a larger, matched samples study, to enable clearer comparisons to be made between offender and normative groups. The preliminary findings suggest that attachment anxiety is associated with antisociality in offender populations, which indicate a therapeutic focus on attachment anxiety as part of correctional care and offender rehabilitation. This study is novel in its aim to examine the influence of childhood parentification, attachment deficits and emotional resilience on adulthood anti sociality in participants from a high-risk offender sample and non-high-risk normative sample.

Hoffmann(2018) studied that There is a long history in criminology of examining the effects of social bonds on criminal behavior. A similar conceptual framework that developed in sociology is social capital theory. Studies using these models have addressed the effects of parent-child relationships on adolescent behavior. However, social bond theory tends to predominate as an explanation of juvenile delinquency. We developed a comparative analysis of measures of family social bonds and family social capital using nationally representative data on youth ($N = 6,432$). Measurement models suggested that family social capital is a more parsimonious latent construct than family social bonds. Moreover, it is a more

efficient predictor of delinquent behavior. Thus, we encourage criminologists to adopt family social capital as a promising concept and empirical variable in their quest to understand delinquent behavior.

Erbay(2019) in his study, aimed to answer two major research questions: (a) What are the characteristics of the juvenile homicide offenders (JHOs) and their offenses in Turkey? (b) How do different risk factors vary across the JHOs and other violent and nonviolent juvenile offenders? The data set was derived from the court records of a group of adjudicated youth ($n = 546$) in Turkey. These records were coded to include information on both the offense characteristics of the homicides committed by juveniles (i.e., motivation, weapon of choice, victims' characteristics, etc.) and the individual and family-level risk factors available in JHOs and two other delinquent groups. Our findings indicated that most of the homicide cases committed by juveniles were motivated by a fight/argument and did not involve any criminal premeditation. The victims were mostly strangers and close in age to the offenders. JHOs were significantly different from other juvenile offenders in a number of aspects, such as age, number of siblings, effectiveness of intra-familial communication, social mobility, having risky friends, being school dropouts, and working at a paid job.

Therefore, on the basis of recent literature available, certain issues and challenges faced by the children who are prone to become juvenile delinquents or are already in the category of juvenile delinquents is been assessed in the present study.

3. Methodology

Objective

The main purpose of the present study is to analyze the issues and challenge faced by the various types of juvenile delinquents in India.

Hypothesis

The children belonging to juvenile delinquent category in India face a lot of issues and challenges in their lives.

Research plan

The research taken in the present study was qualitative research. The design applied to the secondary data gathered was an exploratory design.

Procedure

The secondary data was gathered from latest literature available on this subject including research journals, books, annual reports of health organizations and other surveys conducted by relevant authorities. The data gathered was analyzed and selected literature was taken into account in order to assess the major challenges faced by the children who are in the category of the three types of juvenile delinquents psychologically. The discussion of the data gathered was formed and conclusion was drawn.

4. Discussion

According to the related literature studied, the major psychosocial issues and challenges shortlisted may be as follows:

Issues in juvenile delinquency require lot of attention, it is considered to be one of the most serious problems in the society because it involves various issues and challenges as well as effects. Broken homes, lack of love, lack of parental affection, gang culture, negative influence of media & movie, urbanization, lack of recreation, negative environment, low socio economic status, parental violence, availability of weapons, parental substance use, peer pressure, extra pocket money, parental antisocial behavior, large family size, poor literacy rate, substance use of child, criminal behavior of siblings, love of adventures, early sex experience, bullying. Economic instability, broken homes, peer pressure, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse are some of the social issues. Trauma of having a juvenile offender in family can create instability in family, this will lead to a place where parents of the juvenile offender are treated ill in the society and more responsibility will be created on the parents. Peer pressure is considered to be one of huge reasons why kids commit crime. Most of the times aggression is used to defend or protect themselves from bullying.

Challenges faced by juvenile delinquents

- They are not being provided by the services that support them in physical & emotional development.
- Proper education, visitation, quality of care, counseling & health care services should be provided.
- Supervisions like surveillance cameras and continuous supervision should be there.
- They should be provided with safe custody, which means safe humane environment should be experienced.
- The staff in juvenile homes should be trained to ensure physical & psychological safety of the juvenile delinquents.
- The legal actions should be made as quick as possible, because the hearing time might affect the child if crime is not proved.
- Properly structured buildings with sufficient bed capacity and sanitation are basic.
- Nutritious food should be given as physical & mental development is rapidly seen in that age.
- After taken into custody they should be under screening to ensure that there is no physical harm done.
- Policies should be made in way that promotes security, well being & safety of juvenile delinquents.

Stewart et al., (2019) observed that the parental monitoring literature has long observed a link between parental monitoring and juvenile antisocial behaviour. This study extends this line of research to juveniles who commit sexual abuse. The present study investigates whether juvenile reports of parental monitoring differ between juvenile sexual offenders (n = 338), juvenile delinquents (n = 346), and non-incarcerated juvenile controls (n = 256). Results indicate that both incarcerated groups reported significantly less parental knowledge compared to juvenile controls. Further, both juvenile sexual offenders and juvenile controls reported significantly more parental control compared to juvenile delinquency.

Vemuri (2019) studied the factors influencing the juvenile delinquency. An institutional based cross-sectional study is carried out for a period of three months in the Government Juvenile homes of Hyderabad, Telangana. All the inmates of the male and female juvenile homes (n= 200) available at the time of study who were willing to participate were interviewed. Those who were sick and not cooperative were excluded. A semi-structured questionnaire completed through interviews and studying the subjects' records and ISRD3 questionnaire were used. Institutional ethical clearance was taken before starting the study. 77.5%(155) were males and 22.5%(55) were females. 16.5%(33) were 6-10 yr age group and 83.5%(167) were above 11 yrs. The mean age (yrs) is 14.02 ± 2.96 . 18%(36) didn't attend school and 82%(164) attended school. Age, sex, school attending and the time spent with the parents have shown significance ($p < 0.05$) in the delinquency. The peer influence, smart phone usage, influence of movies and truancy from home also showed significance ($p < 0.05$) in the delinquency.

Pechorro et al., (2019) studied the psychometric properties of the shorter general delinquency scale version of the classic commonly used Self-Report of Delinquency (SRD) measure created for the original National Youth Survey (NYS) using a sample (N = 412) of male (n = 200) and female (n = 212) at-risk Portuguese youths. The shorter version of the SRD demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability, namely in terms of its latent one-factor structure, internal consistency, convergent validity, divergent validity, concurrent criterion validity and discriminant groups validity that overall justifies its use among this population. The shorter general delinquency scale version of the SRD is a valid and reliable measure from a modern psychometric perspective that can be used with at-risk youths.

Souverein (2019) focused on understanding of the factors related to juvenile delinquency and the characteristics of effective forensic youth care has increased substantially. However, effective prevention and intervention strategies are not always employed due to financial, demographical and socio-political challenges countries face, while the burden of mental health in juvenile justice populations is high. With this commentary, we highlight the importance of international collaboration to set out a direction to improve forensic youth care, to bundle our strengths and overcome our challenges. It is a continuation of the course that was set out by Doreleijers and Fegert (2011), in their editorial they highlighted the importance of collaboration and presented an overview of the state of the art on forensic youth care in eight European countries (and Russia). With this manuscript, we present an overview of statistics in juvenile justice of all European countries and present an integrated mission statement for forensic youth care, which was formulated in a keynote debate at the 6th biennial congress of the European Association for Forensic Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychology and other involved professions (EFCAP).

Therefore, it may be said that intervention programs, awareness seminars and new counselling techniques must be devised in order to deal with such issues and challenges faced by juvenile delinquents in order to mainstream them.

5. Conclusion

It may be concluded that there are some major psychosocial issues and challenges faced by the juvenile delinquents of India which require immediate attention. Some

steps must be carried out for the enhancement of mental health and well-being of such children.

References

1. Doreleijers & Fegert (2011) Forensic child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health in Europe. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 5(20), 29-33.
2. Erbay, A., & Buker, H. (2019). Youth who kill in Turkey: A study on juvenile homicide offenders, their offences, and their differences from violent and nonviolent juvenile delinquents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5(8), 141-146.
3. Hoffmann, J. P., & Dufur, M.J. (2018). Family social capital, family social bonds, and juvenile delinquency. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(11), 1525-1544.
4. Kras, K. R., Dmello, J. R., Meyer, K.S., Butterfield, A.E., Rudes, D.S (2018). Attitudes toward punishment, organizational commitment, and cynicism: A multilevel analysis of staff responses in a juvenile justice agency. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 46(3), 475-491.
5. Mallick, S.K., & McCandless, B.R. (1966). A study of catharsis of aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4, 591-496.
6. McGauran, A., Brooks, M., Khan, R. (2019). The role of emotional resilience, childhood parentification, and attachment style on antisocial behavior in adulthood: A comparison of an offender and normative population. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 9 (2), 75-87.
7. Pechorro, P., Castro, A., Hoyle, R.H., Simões. M.R. (2018) The brief sensation-seeking scale: latent structure, reliability, and validity from a sample of youths at-risk for delinquency. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice* 18(2), 99-113.
8. Schachar, R., Tannock, R., & Logan, G.D. (1993). Inhibitory control, impulsiveness, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 13, 721-739.
9. Souverein (2019) Overview of European forensic youth care: Towards an integrative mission for prevention and intervention strategies for juvenile offenders, *Child Adolescent Psychiatry Mental Health*, 13(6), 16-21.
10. Steketee, M., Aussems, C., & Marshall, I. H (2019). exploring the impact of child maltreatment and interparental violence on violent delinquency in an international sample. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12 (1), 64-78.
11. Stewart, K.E., Sitney, M.H., Kaufman, K.L. DeStefano J. & Bui T. (2019). Preventing juvenile sexual offending through parental monitoring: A comparison study of youth's experiences of supervision, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 25(1), 16-30.
12. Tavis, C. (1982). *Anger: The misunderstood emotion*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
13. Vemuri, J.L.N. (2019) A cross-sectional study on the factors influencing juvenile delinquency in the government juvenile home, *International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health*, 6(3), 1329-1334.