

Juvenile Delinquency in India: A Socio-Psychological Analysis



Social Science

KEYWORDS : Juvenile, Delinquency, Social structure, Personality structure

Ms. ABHINANDA CHOUHURY

M. A. II STUDENT Department of Sociology Faculty of Arts The M. S. University of Baroda VADODARA, GUJARAT

DR. M. SREEDEVI XAVIER

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR Department of Sociology Faculty of Arts The M. S. University of Baroda VADODARA, GUJARAT

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to analyze socio-psychologically the main causes of Juvenile Delinquency. It also tries to discuss the preventive measures, treatments, laws, acts and provisions related to this serious problem by mainly focusing on some of the crucial socio-psychological factors responsible for Juvenile Delinquency. The data is collected from secondary sources. The method is content analysis and the data is analyzed from socio-psychological perspectives.

The main objectives of this study are – to examine the characteristics of Juvenile Delinquency; to find out the causes of Juvenile Delinquency; to discuss the preventive measures, treatments, laws, acts and provisions available to deal with Juvenile Delinquency.

It has been found from the study that the family structure and the personality structure are equally responsible factors leading the youth to Delinquency. Pure sociological analysis or pure psychological analysis does not provide full pledged understanding of the problem.

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile Delinquency is, “when a person who is under age (usually below eighteen), is found to have committed a crime in states which have declared by law that a minor lacks responsibility and thus may not be sentenced as an adult” (Voss, 1970). However, the legislatures of several states have reduced the age of criminal responsibility for serious crimes or for repeat offenders to as low as fourteen.

The study of Juvenile Delinquency in the contemporary times is so important because research shows that young people engage in risky behaviors. They act no less than adults. Innocence is found to be missing in them. They show delinquent behaviors, go against the norms of the society, show misconduct and thus, termed as ‘juveniles’. Youths who are involved in ‘status offences’ also fall under ‘juveniles’. Consumption of alcohol at their ‘teens’, drug abuse, having sex at a very young age, teen pregnancy, smoking, stealing, violation of law, ‘gangs’, immoral or indecent conduct, engaging themselves in illegal occupation, attempting to marry without consent, etc. are all common among them. Among the accused of the very recent NIRBHAYA rape case, there was an involvement of a ‘juvenile’. What factors mainly lead to the increasing rate of juveniles in the Indian context must be studied and actions must be taken as soon as possible. It is important to know that, a person is not born a criminal but the surroundings in which he or she lives make him or her criminal.

ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on a number of studies on juvenile delinquency by various scholars and the Government of India the more significant basic characteristics of juvenile delinquency in India are - girls commit fewer delinquencies than boys; the delinquency rates tend to be highest during early adolescence; it is more an urban than a rural phenomenon. The metropolitan cities produce more juvenile delinquents than small cities and towns; children living with incompatible parents and guardians are found to be more involved in the juvenile crimes; low education background is the prime attribute of delinquency; poor economic background is another important characteristic of juvenile delinquency in India; 9 out of 10 juvenile delinquents are first-offenders and only one-tenth is past-offenders; a large number of delinquencies are committed all alone; though some delinquencies are committed in groups yet the number of juvenile gangs having support of organised adult criminals is not large in the country (Ahuja, 1997).

CAUSES

FAMILY STRUCTURE: According to both Sociologists and Psychologists the main source for juvenile delinquency rests on family. Broken family fails to provide affection and control to the child as compared with intact families. The youngsters do not feel secure and content in the conflict/tension-filled family environment (Abrahamsen, 1960). Long-term tension reduces family cohesiveness and affects parents’ ability to provide a comfortable environment to satisfactory child-rearing and family-problem solving. Intact families produce fewer delinquents whereas homes where tension and hostility, existed were good breeding grounds for future delinquents (McCord and Zola, 1959).

If the child does not get love, affection and support from the parents or the child is rejected then it is definitely going to lead to some kind of delinquency. Economically poor families can hardly provide the material needs of the children. Deprived of such needs drive children to secure them through wrong means. The people from the low-caste group are poor compared to other caste groups. Some of the ethnic groups suffer from discrimination. They are deprived of the rights by the government and also other citizens of the nation. They are also deprived of guidance from their parents as well as from teachers as many do not even experience schooling. Thus poverty leads to more delinquent behaviour.

In many instances, delinquency rates are extremely high among minorities, and there are several theories as to why this may be so. Some suggest it is because the majority of society has generally had negative or stereotypical attitudes toward these youth. Others suggest it is because minority youth are not widely exposed to positive role models with whom they can relate to. The impact of neighbourhood in the child is found more in urban areas than in rural areas. Congested neighbourhoods with limited recreation facilities deny the play impulses of children and encourage the formation of ‘gangs’ and contribute to delinquency by fostering anti-social values.

VISUAL MEDIA, PORNOGRAPHIC LITERATURE, and TECHNOLOGY: Movies, cartoons, pornographic literature, internet, mobiles and comic books featuring immorality, sex, smoking, drinking, and brutality leave a strong impression on the young minds of the children and the adolescents. Many a time, they teach the technique of crime and delinquency. They lead to arousing desires for making easy money, suggesting questionable methods for their achievement, inducing toughness and adven-

turousness, arousing sexual desires, and also invoke day dreaming.

PERSONALITY STRUCTURE: According to Psychologists the causation of delinquency is related with early childhood experiences, child rearing techniques, and emotional deprivation. They are more concerned with individual factors like motivation, needs, drives etc. For Psychologists, the basic psychological framework of the child plays a crucial role.

PREVENTION / TREATMENT

ROLE OF SOCIETY AT LARGE: Young people are gaining an increasing amount of liberty and this is often highlighted as a contributing factor in delinquency problems. Uses of the internet, mobile phones, etc. are new trends followed by the teenagers. One way to control from this menace is by 'enrolling them in extracurricular activities'. Doing so can keep youth away from negative peers and teach them valuable characteristics such as commitment and teamwork. Idle hands are the devil's playground whether one is young or old. Bored children get into trouble. So if they are sent to 'school', have them 'play sports', have 'family activities' and if they have as much structured time as possible, then they have less energy and ability to do things they shouldn't.

ROLE OF PARENTS, SIBLINGS, and EXTENDED FAMILY: Learning process or 'socialization' begins at home. As the child grows up, he tries imitating his or her parents, sometimes the elder siblings and then the other relatives too. If parents are lying then children will gradually develop that habit of lying for each and every mistake they commit, no matter how much they have been taught that 'one should not lie'. Thus, the members of the family have to be careful before reacting to any kind of situation, should try and behave properly in the public, must try and inculcate all the good habits within the child's personality. The family should always provide children with enough love, care and support.

ROLE OF PEER GROUPS: 'A friend in need is a friend indeed.' If the friends find out that something wrong is going on with their friend then they must enquire about it and also provide him/her with some positivity solution rather than ignoring or neglecting. If at all necessary, they should also make his/her parents aware of all the happenings.

ROLE OF SPECIALISTS: There are five therapeutic methods generally utilized by psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers like (Ahuja, 1997) - Psychotherapy- It treats emotional and personality problems by psychological means, i.e., by changing the attitudes and feelings about significant persons in the client's past. This therapy involves the solving of conflicts and providing positive alternatives to behaviour adaptation by the client. Reality Therapy-The object of this therapy is to help the delinquent person act in a responsible manner, i.e., to refrain from anti-social activity. Behaviour Therapy- It is modifying the learnt behaviour of the delinquent through the development of new learning processes. Behaviour can be changed through 'positive or negative reinforcement' i.e., reward and punishment. Activity Therapy- Here, a group of six or eight children are gathered or invited to meet at a specific time or place to engage in play or some artistic endeavour. A moderately neurotic child can release his hostility and aggression in creative work, play, or mischief. Milieu or Environment Therapy- It attempts to produce an envi-

ronment that will facilitate meaningful change and satisfactory adjustment. This is used for persons whose deviant behaviour is a reaction to unfavourable life conditions.

ROLE OF AUTHORITY:

Remand or Observation Homes are meant for children during the pendency of their trial in the courts but they are also used for keeping the homeless, destitute and neglected children. The stay here is used for evaluating their personality traits and behaviour; Certified or Reformatory Schools- juveniles given detention order are kept here for a minimum period of three years and a maximum period of seven years. Training is given in tailoring, toy-making, manufacturing leather goods, and agriculture; Borstal School- these were established for youthful offenders in the age group of 16-21 years. No inmate is kept here for less than two years or more than five years. No inmate is eligible to be released from the school unless he had reached the special star grade. Training programmes, depending on his education and potential are also assigned; Probation Hostels or Juvenile Homes- these institutions established under the Probation of Offenders Act are meant to provide residential care and treatment to the offenders released under probation under the supervision of a Probation Officer. The inmates are given complete freedom to go to the market and also to take up jobs of their choice (Ahuja, 1997).

ACTS, ENACTMENTS, and PROVISIONS to address the problem:

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 is the primary legal framework for juvenile justice in India (Mitra, 1988). The Act provides for a special approach towards the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency and provides a framework for the protection, treatment and rehabilitation of children in the purview of the juvenile justice system. This law, brought in compliance of Child Rights Convention, repealed the earlier Juvenile Justice Act of 1986. This Act has been further amended in year 2006 and 2010. Government of India is once again contemplating bringing further amendments and a review committee has been constituted by Ministry of Women and Child Development which is reviewing the existing legislation.

CONCLUSIONS

It is one's core duty to take part in the elimination of juvenile delinquency. Parents must provide conducive environment at home; elders and relatives should cultivate right values among the children; teachers should inculcate moral standards; friends, authority, writers, film directors and producers etc must take a keen interest in providing them right information and right values. Children must be given importance and should never be ignored. Minority groups should also be given equal importance in every nation. Steps must be taken to uplift the people of lower caste as it also contributes in bringing down juvenile delinquency rates. The cells for juveniles should come up with modern ways of studies and be technologically sound so that after they come out they get a brighter future. An adequate understanding of this problem is possible only when social and psychological factors are taken into consideration for analysis. As the cases in India are increasing, some serious action must be taken against it by the Government with strict and good policies on one hand and by Sociologists and Psychologists together in emphasising both external and internal factors causing delinquent behaviour and in providing constructive preventive measures on the other hand.

REFERENCE

- Abrahamsen, David. 1960. Psychology of Crime, Columbia press, New York. | Ahuja, R. 1997. Social Problems in India, Rawat Publications, Jaipur. | McCord Joan and Zola Irving. 1959. Origin of Crime, Columbia press, New York. | Mitra, N. L. 1988. Juvenile Delinquency and the Indian Justice System, Deep and Deep Publications, Delhi. | Voss, H. L. 1970. Society, Delinquency, and Delinquent Behavior, Little Brown and Company, Boston.