

Aimen*

Criminology

Q4 Write a note / comprehensive note on the risk and protective factors of Juvenile delinquency in Pakistan (2020)

Introduction:

Juvenile delinquency refers to the participation of minors, typically individuals below the age of 18, in illegal or deviant behaviour that violates societal norms and laws. The word juvenile comes from the Latin word **Juvenilis** which means "young" or "youthful". The word Delinquency comes from the Latin word "Delinquere" which means "away" or "to leave"/"abandon". So, when combined Juvenile Delinquency refers to the behaviour of young individuals who engage in illegal or deviant acts, often in violation of societal norms and law.

According to **Edwin H. Sutherland**, "the process whereby persons come to engage in the violation of legal norms through association with others who are already engaged in such violation." Whereas **Travis Hirschi** defines it as "the failure of personal and social controls to prevent a child or

adolescent from engaging in delinquent acts."

Juvenile Delinquency: Risk and Protective Factors

Children are the key to Pakistan's future prosperity. Today's children are tomorrow's productive workers and engaged citizens. As per **UNICEF report**, **39%** of the Pakistan's population under **18 years** the latest data shows Pakistan having **80.4 Million** children in 2017.

Juvenile delinquency remains a pressing social issue that affects nations across the globe. Pakistan being no exception. According to global data, juvenile delinquency rates vary across countries, influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. As per **UNODC report** global average for juvenile crime stood at **13.2 per 100,000** juveniles. Juvenile delinquency has been a growing concern. In 2020 **UNICEF** report, Pakistan faced increasing challenges in addressing the issue. Several research studies have explored the complex web of factors contributing to juvenile delinquency in Pakistan.

Socioeconomic disadvantage, family dysfunction, lack of Parental supervision and exposure to violence have been identified as significant risk factors (UNICEF-2019 report). According to SPARC report 1500-2000 child offenders are in Pakistan's jails. 540 minors in Punjab, 260 minors imprisoned in Sindh, KPK had 510, and Balochistan had around 55.

Fighters 2.4%	Good kids 1.4%
Dealers 3.0%	Robbers 36.2%
Drug Dealers 29.1%	Property offenders 27.9%

~ Percentage of Juvenile offenses.

Causes	of	Juvenile offenses
Availability of drugs, Abuse of child, Social environment, Illiteracy, unconsciousness, lack of opportunities	Broken family, lack of Parents, supervision, family conflict, Neglect and cruelty towards child, Environment of the Family	Effect of Foreign culture, Poverty, Unemployment, Natural disasters, Industrialization and urbanization, Effect of social Media, TV channels.

Social Factors	Cultural Factors
Family Factors	Economic Factors

Risk Factors:

(ii) Poverty and Socio-Economic Disparities:

As per Robert K. Merton's Strain theory, individuals experience strain when they are unable to achieve culturally approved goals using legitimate means. In the context of poverty and socioeconomic disparities, young individuals facing economic hardships might feel frustrated by their inability to access opportunities for success.

For instance, a teenager living in an economically disadvantaged area in Pakistan might face pressure to provide for their family due to financial struggles. With limited legitimate employment options, they may resort to illegal activities like petty theft or drug dealing to meet their basic needs.

(iii) Family Dysfunction and Parental Neglect:

According to **Robert Burgess** and **Ronald Akers: Social Learning Theory** individuals learn behaviour through observation and imitation of others, particularly significant figures in their lives. If a family environment lacks positive role models and effective discipline, a young person may be more likely to engage in delinquent behavior.

For instance a child growing up in a household with parental substance abuse and domestic violence may internalize these behaviours, leading to a higher risk of violence and delinquency in their own life.

(iii) **Peer Influence:**

According to **Ronald Akers's Social Learning theory** peer influence plays a significant role in shaping behavior, as adolescents may model the behaviour of their delinquent peers.

For instance a teenager in Pakistan who associates with a group of friends involved in vandalism may become more likely to engage in similar destructive acts due to the influence of their peers.

(iv) Lack of Education and Employment Opportunities:

Strain theory by Robert K. Merton's suggests that inadequate access to education and employment opportunities can create strain between societal goals for instance financial stability, success and the means available to achieve them.

For instance: a young person who drops out of school due to financial constraints and has limited job prospects might experience strain, leading them to consider illegal activities to earn money.

(v) Drug and Substance Abuse:

This factor can be understood through **Social learning theory** as individuals might learn drug and substance abuse behaviors by observing and imitating others, such as family members, friends, or media influences.

For instance a teenager in Pakistan might start using drugs after witnessing their older sibling using drugs as a coping

mechanism for stress.

vi **Exposure to Violence and Trauma:**

Exposure to violence and trauma can lead individuals to internalize aggressive behaviors as a way to cope with or replicate their experiences. - **social learning**

Theory

For instance a child who witnesses frequent instances of domestic violence at home may become desensitized to violence, making them more likely to use violent means to resolve conflicts outside of the home.

vii **Involvement in Gangs:**

Gang involvement can be influenced by social learning, as individual may adopt the values, norms and behaviours of the gang members they associate with.

For instance a teenager in Pakistan may join a gang to gain a sense of belonging, protection, and identity, but this affiliation might expose them to criminal activities that they would not have engaged in otherwise.

viii **Accessibility of Weapons:**

As per **Cohen and Felson's routine activities theory** the presence of weapon is relevant to the Routine activity theory which suggests that crime is more likely to occur when motivated offenders have access to suitable targets and there are no capable guardians.

For instance in areas where firearms are easily accessible and not adequately regulated, disputes or confrontations can escalate into violent crimes more frequently.

Protective factors:

(i) **Strong Family Bonds and Supportive Parenting:**

According to **Walter and Travis Hirschi** strong social bonds with family, school, and community as protective factors against delinquency. Travis noted that inner and outer restraints form a person's self control which prevents acting against social norms children who lack this self control then

may grow up to commit crimes

For instance A teenager who has a supportive and nurturing family environment is less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour as they have positive relationships and strong social bonds that discourage criminal acts.

ii Access to Quality Education:

Education is a crucial element in social control, as it can provide young individuals with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to lead successful lives.

For instance a child who receives quality education in Pakistan is more likely to have better future prospects, reducing the risk of delinquency as they can pursue legitimate paths for personal and professional growth.

iii Community Support and Engagement:

As **Social control theory** suggests that active community involvement and support can create a sense of belonging and attachment to prosocial institutions, acting

as a protective factor against delinquency
For instance a community in Pakistan
that organizes recreational activities
mentoring programs, and after school
initiatives for young people can contribute
to positive youth development and reduce
delinquent behavior.

iv **Mental Health Services:**

Access to mental health services
can address underlying psychological
issues, reducing the risk of delinquency
associated with untreated mental health
problems.

For instance a troubled teenager in
Pakistan who receives counseling and
support for their mental health struggles
may find healthier coping mechanisms
reducing the likelihood of engaging
in criminal activities as a response
to their issues.

vi **Positive Peer Associations:**

Social learning theory suggests that
peer associations can influence individual

to adopt prosocial behaviors and discourage delinquency.

For instance a teenagers in Pakistan who surrounds themselves with friends who prioritize academics, sports, or community service is more likely to engage in those positive activities and avoid delinquent behaviors.

Youth Employment Programs:

As per **Strain theory** access to legitimate employment opportunities can reduce strain by providing a legal means to achieve financial goals.

For instance a young person who secures a job through a youth employment program can avoid engaging in illegal activities for income and develop skills for a more promising future.

vii Restorative Justice Approaches:

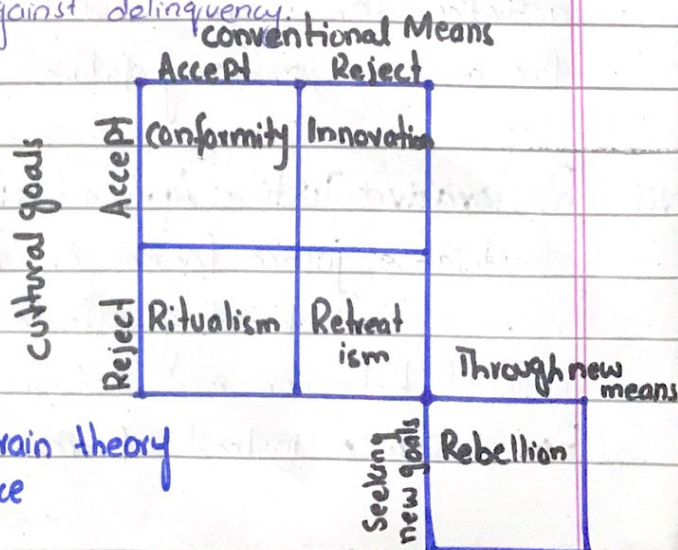
Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm and rehabilitating offenders encouraging prosocial behaviour and reducing recidivism.

For instance instead of resorting to

traditional punitive measures, a juvenile offender in Pakistan is engaged in restorative justice program where they have to make amends for their actions and contribute positively to the community they harmed.

Conclusion:

Juvenile delinquency in Pakistan is a multifaceted issue. As per **Merton's Anomie theory** explains how societal pressures and blocked conventional avenues may lead individuals/juveniles to adopt deviant means to achieve success. However, protective factors as strong family bond, quality education, community support and mental health services act as critical buffers against delinquency.



∴ Merton's strain theory of deviance