

What is juvenile delinquency? Explain the nature, extent and causes of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan. Suggest remedial measures for reducing juvenile delinquency in Pakistan.

Outline:

1. Who is a Juvenile?
2. Definition of Juvenile Delinquency
3. Nature of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan.
4. Extent of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan.
5. Causes of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan.
6. How to reduce Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan.
7. Conclusion

Who is a Juvenile ?

According to Section 3 of Majority Act 1875:

"Every person domiciled in Pakistan shall be deemed to have ^{attained his} majority when he shall have completed his age of 18 years and not before."

From the above statement, juvenile is a person who has not attained his or her eighteenth birthday.

Definitions of Juvenile Delinquency:

Seigel and Welsh:

According to Seigel and Welsh,

"It is an act of participating in unlawful behavior as a minor or individual younger than the statutory age of minority."

Legal Definition:

From a legal standpoint, juvenile delinquency is defined by

violations of laws committed by individuals under the age of 18 that would have been a crime if committed by an adult.

For Example: Theft, Murder, Stealing etc.

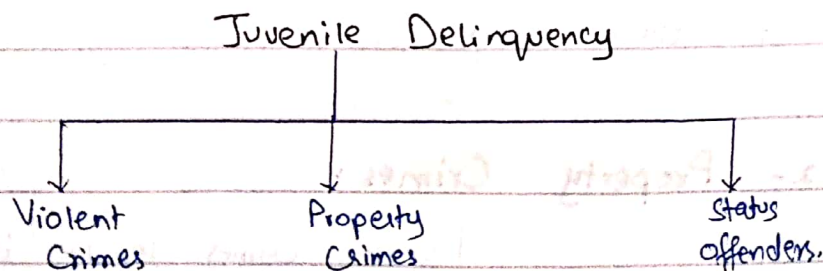
Behavioral Definition:

From a behavioral standpoint, juvenile delinquency is often defined as conduct by a minor that deviates from the socially accepted standards.

For Example: Truancy, Running away from home, etc.

Nature of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan:

Juvenile delinquency encompasses a wide range of behaviors, most important three are discussed below:



1- Violent Crimes :

Violent crimes involve the use of force or threat against a person that may cause physical harm or the fear of harm to the victim.

Juvenile involvement:

Some juvenile engage in violent behaviors due to various factors, including personal conflicts, peer pressure, or exposure to violence in their environment.

Examples:

Assault, Homicide, Robbery, Murder, etc.

Case Study :

In a highlighted case from Bargarh, where a woman named Kanwal Paveen was shot by her 9 years old nephew on the instructions of their neighbour.

2- Property Crimes :

Property crimes involve the interference with another individual's right to use or enjoy their property.

These offenses are typically against tangible items and do not necessarily involve direct harm to a person.

Juvenile involvement:

Juveniles may engage in property crimes for various reasons, including economic factors, thrill-seeking behavior, or peer influence.

Examples:

Burglary, Theft, Vandalism, Arson, etc.

3 - Status Offenses:

Status offenses are actions that are considered offenses only because of the individual's status as a juvenile. These behaviors are not criminal for adults but are prohibited for juveniles due to their age.

Juvenile involvement:

Status offenses reflect challenges related to adolescence, family dynamics or personal struggles.

Examples:

Truancy, Curfew violations, Driving without license etc.

Some other juvenile offenses include cyberbullying, gang involvement, possession of weapons etc.

Extent of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan:

The statistics on juvenile detention centers and real number of detained individuals are grossly skewed. In their publication "The State of Pakistan's Children", the society for the protection of the rights of child (SPARC) reported on about 1500-2000 child offenders in Pakistan as per 2021.

→ According to the same news report, 90% of these perpetrators are just awaiting trial.

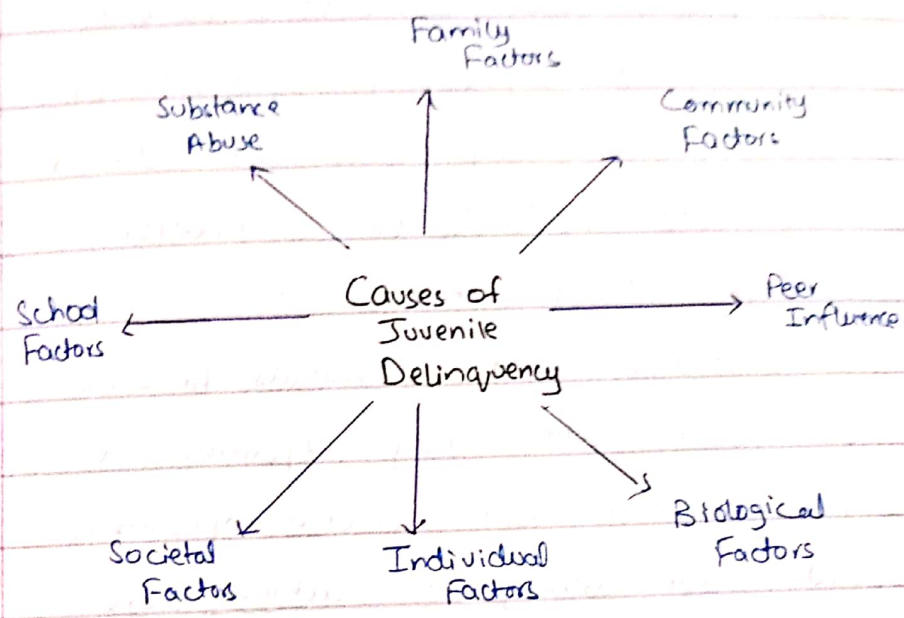
→ As of April 2024, there were 540 minors in Punjab prison including teenage girls, with over 464 awaiting trial.

→ Sindh has around 260 minors imprisoned.

→ KPK has 510 imprisoned juveniles.

→ Balochistan has around 58.

Causes of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan:



1- Family Factors:

Family factors can contribute significantly to juvenile delinquency. Family dysfunction, Parental criminality and Lack of proper supervision can lead juveniles to become delinquent. Social Control Theory posits that individuals are naturally inclined toward deviant behavior, and it's the social bonds and control that prevent them from engaging in delinquency.

2 - Individual Factors :

Individual factors such as psychological elements, low self-esteem, and impulsivity contribute in juvenile delinquency. Low self-esteem may lead individuals to ^{seek} validation through deviant activities. Strain Theory demonstrates that individuals become delinquent when they experience a disconnection b/w societal expectations and their ability to achieve those expectations through ~~these~~ conventional means. Just like a teenager who is facing academic pressures and is struggling with low self-esteem turned to become delinquent to cope with perceived failures.

3 - Societal Factors :

Societal factors have significant impact on juvenile delinquency. Media influence, cultural influence, and inadequate juvenile justice system has contributed a lot in ^{increasing} delinquent behavior.

This issue can be understood in the light of Social Learning Theory that

An individual learns behavior through observation in its social environment. There are many prominent examples of teenagers killing after learning from online games such as PUBG. This shows the pertinent impact of media on individuals.

4. Peer Influence :

Peer pressure and desire for social acceptance has led individuals towards delinquency. As the famous proverb states that "a man is known by the company he keeps". This proverb validates the Social Learning Theory that describes the impact of social circles on the individual. There are many highlighted cases where juveniles, seeking validation from their peers, became involved in criminal activities.

5. School Factors :

School factors such as academic failures and school environment contribute significantly in delinquency.

Academic failure results in frustration and alienation and individuals seek delinquent paths to get success. Also the school environment where there is no proper teacher support and child bullying exacerbate the situation. Strain Theory demonstrates this behavior that how children seek alternative deviant paths to achieve culturally accepted goals such as academic success.

6- Community Factors:

Community factors such as poverty, community violence, and limited opportunities are pushing juveniles towards delinquency. This can be understood in the light of Strain Theory. The increasing rate of street crimes by children is a result of their worst economic situations. This economic strain is leading them towards criminal activities.

7- Substance Abuse:

The exposure to substance abuse within the social environment

has significantly contributed to the delinquency of juveniles. Under the lens of Social Learning Theory, it is evident that individuals learn deviant behaviors through association with peers engaged in substance abuse. The widespread availability of narcotics and drugs have lured many teenagers into a life of crime.

e- Biological Factors:

Some research suggests that genetic factors contribute to traits associated with impulsivity and aggression, which are linked to delinquency. Also some brain-abnormalities (both in structure and function) affect impulse control and decision making, influencing an individual's susceptibility to engaging in criminal activities.

Remedies for juvenile delinquency in Pakistan:

Addressing juvenile delinquency in Pakistan requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some potential

remedies:

1- Child Welfare Committees:

Child welfare committees should be formed in every district or group of districts. Any child in need of care and protection can be produced before the committee.

2- Shelter Homes:

The State Government may recognize reputed and capable voluntary organizations and provide them assistance to set up and administer as many shelter homes for juveniles or children as may be required.

3- Special Juvenile Police:

For dealing with the juveniles or children, Special Juvenile Police should be constituted to be specially trained and instructed. Also, in every police station, at least one officer with aptitude and appropriate training and orientation may be designated as the 'juvenile or child welfare officer'.

who will handle the juvenile or the child in co-ordination with the police.

4- The Rehabilitation and Social Integration:

The rehabilitation and social integration of a child should begin during the stay of the child in a children home and it should be carried out alternatively by adoption, foster care, sponsorship and sending the children to an after-care organization.

5- Effective Home Conditions:

The primary institution for the development of a child is home. Home conditions affect him a lot. So suitable home conditions should be provided to a child to prevent him to be a juvenile delinquent.

Conclusion:

To cut the story short, tackling juvenile delinquency in Pakistan necessitates a comprehensive and

Collaborative approach that addresses a myriad of social, economic, and systemic factors. The menace cannot be uprooted but there are solutions to keep a control on the problem of juvenile delinquency. In the best interest of the delinquent, he or she should be rehabilitated as early as possible and integrated back in the society. Also the state must protect the rights of these children and come up with reformative methods and instill in them values that can play a constructive role in the society.
