

Q: What is juvenile delinquency? Explain the causes of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan and suggest remedial measures for reducing juvenile delinquency.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Juvenile delinquency refers to behavior of minors that is anti-social, criminal or otherwise violates social norms or laws. It encompasses a wide range of actions from petty crimes to heinous crimes. The study of juvenile delinquency is a crucial aspect of criminology, as it seeks to understand the causes, consequences and effective remedial measures for such behaviors. Socio-economic factors as well as environmental factors contribute to delinquent behavior of juveniles.

Causes of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan

a. Growing Malnutrition

The growing malnutrition in children of Pakistan at their growing age is producing depression, anger and dissatisfaction in

juveniles that leads them towards delinquent behavior. **For instance,** After 2022 floods, the rate of child malnutrition has increased by 50% and 29% adult population of three affected provinces is suffering from food insecurity (World Bank, Malnutrition in Pakistan, November 2023).

b. Limited Access to Education

The limited access to education makes juveniles more vulnerable to criminal behavior. For instance, in 2023 the number of out-of-school children soar to 28 million (DAWN, Illiteracy in Pakistan, October 2023). This rapid surge is a cause of growing number of juvenile delinquents.

c. Exploitation of Juveniles

Child labor is another cause of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan because when juveniles get exploited by elite class then they get dissatisfied by the society and law and order. This leads them towards delinquent behaviors. For instance, in July 2023, a qualitative study of International Labor Organization determined that one in every four **rich** households in Pakistan exploits a juvenile in their domestic work.

Chronic Unemployment

When juveniles are not engaged in constructive opportunities, then chronic ^{youth} unemployment of 10% in Pakistan is tantamount to rubbing salt into the wounds of youth already bearing 27% hike in overall prices. This depressive situation pulls the youngsters towards illegal means to fulfill their needs.

e. Growing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is growing rapidly in Pakistan; for instance, recently a 22 years old girl named Maria Bibi is killed overnight by her brother in the presence of her father (Tribune, domestic violence in Pakistan, March 2024). Juveniles learn criminal behavior from their family environments (that) in these kind of experiences.

f. Poor law enforcement

Juveniles learn criminal behavior when they observe that youngsters of their age are committing crimes freely in society. In Pakistan, poor law enforcement is instigating juvenile delinquencies. For instance, in November 2023 an underage driver 'intentionally' rammed car into.

family in DHA Lahore; but still no serious step has been taken by the police against him.

g. Violence promoted by Media

One of the major causes of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan is the violence promoted by media. For example, a case study of GC University Faisalabad showed that the respondents are more likely to watch crime shows of Express News that expressed feelings of insecurity in them towards society and they have also learnt new techniques of crime.

h. Breakdown of Family System

Juveniles become more prone to depression, anger, frustration due to breakdown of family system in Pakistan, which takes them towards criminal behaviors. The rapid increase in number of broken home family kids is another increase of growing juvenile delinquencies. For instance, a surge in cases of divorce, family disputes and domestic violence has been observed in Rawalpindi as per data recorded between January 1st and June 30th, 2023. In the same period courts sanctioned **2,393 divorces** and custody of **231 children**, previously with fathers, was granted to mothers.

Explicating Juvenile Delinquency in the Light of Theories of Criminology

→ Rational Choice Theory

According to this theory, a person commits crime on the basis of cost and benefit analysis. So, it is poor legislation of Pakistan that compels juveniles to commit crime.

→ Scientific School of Thought

According to this school of thought, juveniles commit crimes due to depression, frustration and anger that is developed in them due to lack of proper diet and nutrition. This malnutrition disturbs their biological condition and result in delinquent behaviors.

→ Bandura's theory

Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that juveniles learn new behaviors and attitudes by observing and imitating others. This theory emphasizes how both

environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence the human learning and behavior.

→ Social Disorganization Theory

Shaw and McKay observed that in disorganized societies having deteriorated neighborhoods, juveniles become more prone to criminal behaviors.

→ Strain Theory

R.K. Merton has given the concept of "Anomie" in which all institutions fail to perform their roles. He contended that this situation creates stress, depression, anger and dissatisfaction in juveniles that led them towards delinquency.

Remedial Measures for Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan

a. Engaging Juveniles in Constructive Activities

Juvenile delinquency can be controlled by engaging juveniles of Pakistan in constructive activities. For instance, Kamyab Jawan Programme aimed to empower youth and provide skills, training and

financial assistance.

b. Strong legislation against exploitation of Juveniles

In order to prevent juvenile delinquency strong legislation should be ~~done~~ ^{done} against exploitation of juveniles. Despite having laws like Children Act 1991 and Punjab Restriction on Employment of children 2016, child labor persists. So, juvenile delinquency can be prevent^{-ed} by giving protection to juveniles through strong legislation.

c. Strong law enforcement

Juvenile delinquency can be prevented by implementation of law and order. According to Rational Choice theory, juvenile delinquency can be prevented by ensuring that the pain juveniles bear after committing crimes exceed the pleasure which they gain from that crime.

d. Community-Based support services

Juvenile delinquency can effectively be reduced by using community crime prevention strategies. Its best example is of **Seattle Community Crime Prevention Project** ^{which is} ~~as~~ an exemplary project for jurisdictions across Pakistan.

Lindsay and McGrills presented the idea of Neighborhood Watch Programs for preventing growing crime rates (Crime Prevention strategies, 1986).

e- Parenting Education and support services

Providing parenting education and support services can equip parents with skills and resources needed to nurture healthy family relationships with juveniles. Many developed countries like **UK** offer these services; Pakistan should also encourage these services. Not only UK, Odesa has recently opened child-friendly spot that offers support services to parents.

f- Ensuring Ease of Access of Juveniles to Education

Juvenile delinquency can be controlled by ensuring ease of access of juveniles to education. Its one of the best examples is of **Ehsaas program** launched by Pakistani government that offers needs-based school stipends to promote education among disadvantaged children. It incentivizes parents to send their children to schools rather than sending them to workplaces.

Concluding Thoughts

Juvenile delinquency in Pakistan presents a complex challenge, rooted in a myriad of socio-economic factors such as poverty, lack of education and inadequate social support structures. But rehabilitation programs that offer counselling, vocational training and reintegration assistance to juveniles offer them a chance of leading productive lives.