

Q. Define ^{Juvenile} delinquency, its extent and nature and causes.

Answer

• Introduction:

Society is an integration of people of all ages. As adults have the tendency to commit crimes and undesired behaviour, children are also likely to exhibit such behaviours. Juvenile delinquency discusses the tendency of committing undesirable acts of the children.

There are several contributing factors that result in juvenile delinquency and in order to nurture children to grow up into healthy individuals, these causes should be prevented.

• Definition of Juvenile Delinquency:

The term juvenile means child who is not an adult yet whereas delinquency (derived from the term delinquent) means negligence. Therefore, juvenile delinquency can be defined as,

‘Behaviour exhibited by a child that opposes social norms.’

Nature and Extent:

The nature of juvenile delinquency is divided into two categories.

(a) Behavioural Aspect (violation of moral code):

According to behavioural aspect, the child exhibits frequent disapproved behaviour. It is moral in nature. For example, lethargy, absenteeism and ill-mannerism.

Even though these are not criminal offences, these are still considered as violations.

(b) Legal Aspect (violation of Law):

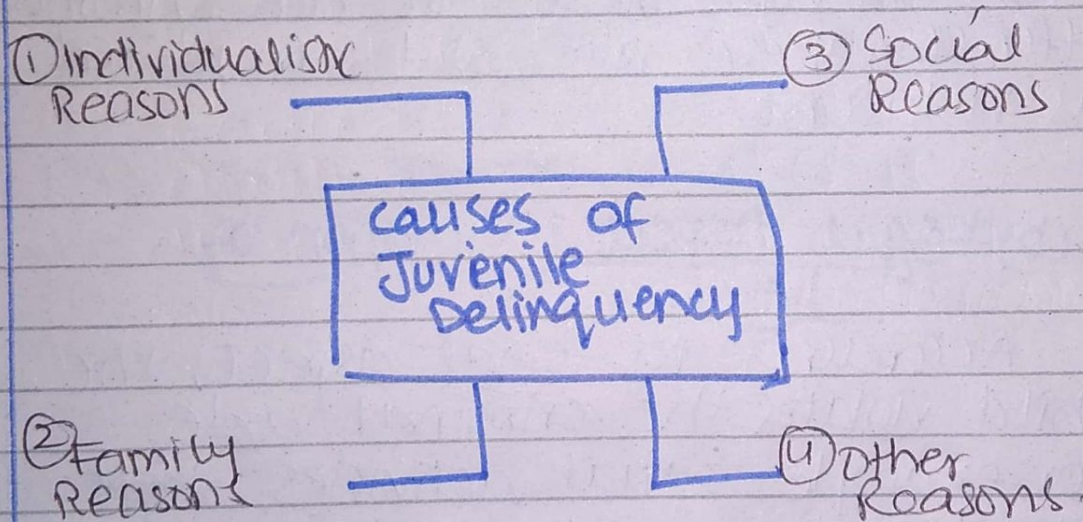
According to legal aspect, the child violates the criminal code.

For example, sexual activities, theft or damaging of properties. Such acts are legal by nature and considered to be criminal offences. As opposed to the behavioural aspect of juvenile delinquency, in this case the child has committed a crime according to the rule of the land and can be charged for it.

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Causes of Juvenile Delinquency:

Juvenile delinquency is a complex phenomenon attributed to a number of factors. Where some of these factors can be avoided, there are others that cannot be side-lined. In order to ensure that the child grows into a law abiding citizen, these factors should be catered while bringing a child up. These include:



1) Individualistic Reasons:

These reasons are based on the physical being and individuality of a child. These include:

(a) Physical Defect or Disorder:

children that appear to be different from their peers due

to physical defects tend to be prone to delinquent behaviour. This can primarily be because of embarrassment faced by children for being different and then reacting to it.

(b) Low intelligence:

Low intelligence nurtures anti-social behaviour in children thus making them more prone to delinquency.

(c) Malnutrition:

Children that suffer from malnutrition tend to develop negative characteristics. Bridge contends that:

— 'malnutrition causes inertia and mental sluggishness or hyper-excitability and nervousness. Both can lead to delinquent behaviour in a child.' —

(2) Family Reasons:

Family is the institute that a child interacts on a daily basis and hence, it plays a crucial role in development of delinquent

behaviour.

(a) Presence of step parents:

The presence of step parents can result in lack of love and affection that may negatively impact a child. According to Bridge,

— 'A child may resent the fact that he/she is foster parents, step parents or guardians and to be marked out from other children. This makes it difficult for them to help him in his social development?—

(b) Absence of love and affection from parents:

Parental love plays a crucial role in balanced growth of a child. In case this is absent from his life, he tends to seek validation and love from outside, thus becoming part of undesirable groups.

(c) Quarrels Among Parents:

when a child constantly sees his parents fight, it develops negative feelings in him. He becomes frustrated and violent.

(d) Use of Alcohol and Drugs by Parents:

If parent (s) is addicted to alcohol or other drugs, it is most likely possible that he is unable to give proper care and attention to his children. Such child seeks attention from outside and has a tendency to become delinquent.

(e) High ambitions of Parents:

when parents force their children to become someone other than what they desire, the children become frustrated. This may cause them to rebel against their parents.

(f) Loose or very strict discipline:

In case where parents have loose discipline, a child



becomes alienated and does not care for the consequences of his actions. On the contrary, if the parents are too strict, the child may foster anguish and rebel or leave home.

(g) Broken homes:

Broken homes where the parents are either divorced or have died also leave a hole in the hearts of children. They seek refuge in the company that may prove to be harmful for them.

(3) Social Reasons:

According to Segel, the societal interaction also plays an important part in child delinquency.

(a) Interpersonal Interactions:

The interaction of children with family, peers, schools, job etc, if interrupted or disrupted, can foster delinquency.

(b) Community conditions:

It is seen that most of crime and delinquency is observed in deteriorated innercity areas. These places are filled with fear, despair and poverty that negatively affects a child.

(c) Exposure to violence:

Such areas make children to be exposed to a constant stream of violence. Growing up in such conditions tends to develop violent children.

(d) Social change:

It is seen the political instability and mistrust, economic distress and family disintegration play an important role in delinquency.

(e) Socio-economic factors:

People living in poor socio-economic status can have tendency of being delinquent.



(f) Racial Disparity:

Racial disparity takes a toll on young people - It is seen that poverty rates in minority groups are higher than that of whites.

(4) Other Factors:

(1) Poverty:

Poverty is said to be mother of all social evils - In case a child is brought up in poor conditions, he is most likely not educated. Neither is he taught moral and social values. Thus, he develops criminal behaviour to fulfil his needs.

(2) Illiteracy:

Illiteracy is a curse. Parents who remain illiterate during the upbringing of their child pass the illiteracy to them. Thus, making them irresponsible adults.

(3) children out of school:

If the children are out of school, they are deprived of a healthy environment. Thus, they become delinquent.

(4) child labour:

It is seen that children who are forced to do labour as children face humiliation and abuse. Therefore, they develop feelings of resentment.

(5) schooling:

Schooling plays an important role in moral development of students. In case, a school does not account its importance, children develop immoral attitudes.

• conclusion:

Society plays an important role in developing the minds of a child. In fact, the society is the brain of a child. Child delinquency can be avoided if the causes are checked. Thus, not only saving a child but also society as whole.