

Explain juvenile delinquency. What are the socio-economic, demographic and environmental factors that lead to juvenile delinquency?

Answer:-

1) Introduction:-

Juvenile delinquency refers to the commission of illegal or immoral acts by individuals who have not yet attained the age of majority. Unlike adult crimes, juvenile delinquency occurs not only due to socio-economic or psychological reasons, lack of adult supervision, poor judgement and lack of clear understanding of the world often leads to such acts.

2) Defining Juvenile Delinquency :-

As the name suggests, juvenile delinquency is a combo of two words : juvenile and delinquency.

Juvenile refers to 'any person under the formal age of adulthood (which is 18 under most jurisdictions)'. Delinquency refers to 'socially unacceptable or immoral behavior'.

a) Definition by United Nations :-

According to Beijing Rules (1985),

"Juvenile delinquency refers to the range of behaviors prohibited by law by persons below 18 years of age."

b) Definition by Pakistan - JISA (2018) :-

According to JISA (2018) :-

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a juvenile is "a child under 18" and is defined as "a child who may be dealt with for an offense in a manner which is different from an adult."

Comparison Between Behavioral and Legal Definitions of Juvenile Delinquency

Aspect	Behavioral	Legal
• Focus	Antisocial or Deviant Acts	Acts Criminalized by Law
• Scope	Broad (truancy, drug use, running away)	Narrow (theft, assault)
• Example (Pakistan)	Street Children using drugs	Juvenile convicted of robbery under PPC.

3) Factors Leading to Juvenile Delinquency:-

The study of factors leading to JD reveals the complexity of the problem as multiple factors

are involved. Given below is a list of these factors.

a) Socio-Economic Factors:-

Socio-economic factors of JD link directly to poverty, unemployment and lack of education.

i) Poverty

Poverty is the main socio-economic factor that leads to poor living conditions and contributes to juvenile delinquency.

ii) Culture of Poverty in Urban Slums

Urban slums or squatter settlements are the hotspots where poverty, illiteracy and social chaos converge to create a fertile ground for JD.

Example: Slums in Lyari, Karachi.

iii) Out of School Children

Illiteracy is a leading cause of JD and Out-of-School-Children

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are at high risk. Pakistan has 24 mn of such children all running at high risk.

iv) Peer Group Influence

A child's peer group can also influence its delinquent behavior.

Such groups constitute a subculture (of delinquency) where delinquent children find high acceptability.

Example:- Bike theft gangs in Saddar, Karachi

b) Demographic factors:-

These factors include population specific aspects of juvenile delinquency that are specific to Pakistan.

i) Males being more prone to delinquency

This is a general trend but is more pronounced in countries like Pakistan. Females here are not allowed to display delinquent behaviors.

Males, on the other hand, account for 97% of such behavior.

ii) Delinquency is high where Drug Use is high

This factor is evident from the fact that Pakistani provinces like KPK, where drugs are easily available have high JD rates. The highest number of juvenile currently is in KPK with 1657 cases (HRCP, 2025).

iii) Delinquency is high in Broken Families

According to Social Bonding Theory by T. Herschi, children drift to delinquent peers and street gangs when close family relationships are missing. This has also been proved by NIH's research of 2018.

c) Environmental Factors:-

These factors include everything in the environment of a children.

a) Psychological Trauma

Psychological trauma in the

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early stages of life including harsh treatment, abuse and neglect can lead to delinquent behavior.

ii) Family-Related Causes

Family related factors like inconsistent or harsh discipline, parental substance abuse or corporal punishments can also lead to juvenile delinquency in teenagers.

iii) Exposure to Violent Media

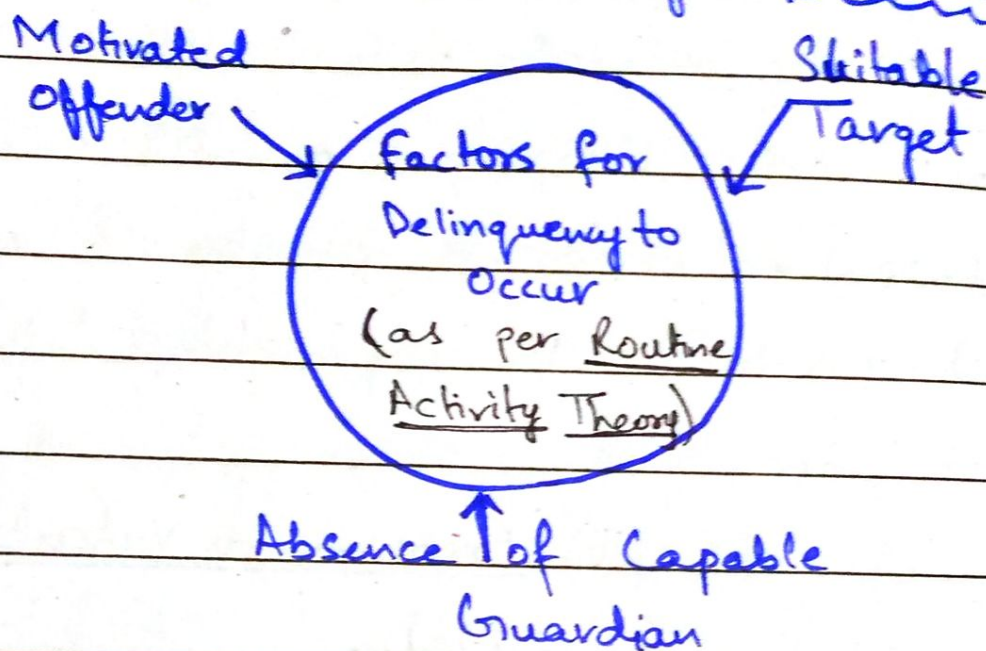
Exposure to violent media with violent imagery, video games with pornographic element and use of weapons instill violence in children while their brains are still underdeveloped.

iv) Social Disorganization

According to Social Disorganization Theory, weak institutions at community level (schools, mosques and neighbourhoods) and breakdown of traditional community bonds with rapid

urbanization, migration and dislocation also contributes to juvenile delinquency.

How Routine Activities Theory Explains It?



4) Conclusion:

Juvenile delinquency includes both the illegal and immoral acts of children under age of majority. Since such behavior is a result of several personal, social, economic and environmental factors, Dealing efficiently with it also requires a holistic approach comprising of counseling, education, diversion and community involvement.