

# **Juvenile Delinquency and its Contributing Factors: A Review with Special Reference to Bihar, India**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A child is born innocent; however, adverse social, economic, and environmental conditions may influence children toward delinquent behaviour. Juvenile delinquency has emerged as a major concern in modern criminology because increasing involvement of adolescents in criminal activities threatens social stability and harmony. The present review paper aimed to examine the major factors contributing to juvenile delinquency through an extensive review of published literature, research articles, books, and reports. The findings revealed that the majority of juvenile delinquents belonged to the 16–18 years age group, a stage characterized by increased independence, emotional instability, and impulsive behaviour. Most delinquent children had educational qualifications below matriculation level, poor academic performance, low school attachment, and a high rate of school dropout. Emotional problems such as inferiority feelings, jealousy, frustration, and social rejection were also commonly observed among delinquent adolescents. Poverty emerged as one of the major driving forces behind delinquency, as many juveniles belonged to economically disadvantaged families where parental supervision and emotional care were inadequate due to occupational pressures and financial hardship. Lack of parental love, affection, and guidance, combined with feelings of deprivation and dissatisfaction, encouraged children to adopt deviant practices to fulfill their needs and aspirations.

**Keywords:** Juvenile delinquency, Poverty, School dropout, Family environment, Emotional problems, Parental supervision

## **INTRODUCTION**

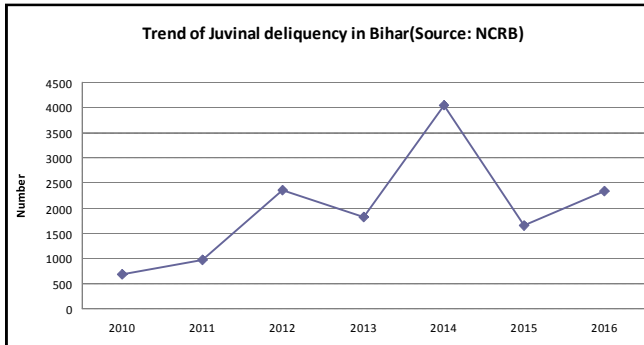
According to the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 of India, any individual below 18 years of age is legally recognized as a child (Morgan and Murray, 1935), while the age of criminal responsibility is fixed at seven years (Siegel and McCormick, 2010). The term “delinquent” refers to a person found guilty of unlawful behaviour (Murstain, 1963), whereas juvenile delinquency is the act of being involved in behaviors which are in conflict with the law by a minor. Thus, the concept of juvenile delinquency can be stated as when a child or young person is at fault of some offense or antisocial behavior or the demeanor of child is beyond parental control (Venudhar, 2016). Children are considered the valuable human resources and future assets of a nation. Therefore, they should be provided with a healthy social, emotional, and educational

environment to ensure their overall physical, mental, and social development. Although children are born innocent, adverse social and environmental conditions may gradually influence them toward antisocial and criminal behaviour. Proper care, guidance, and supportive surroundings can help transform them into responsible and productive citizens. In recent years, juvenile delinquency has emerged as a serious issue in criminology because increasing involvement of adolescents in criminal activities threatens social harmony, discipline, and stability within society.

### **Trend of Juvinial deliquency in Bihar**

Data reported by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicate a substantial increase in cases of juvenile delinquency in Bihar between 2010 and 2014, with reported incidents rising by more than 400 per cent

during this period. However, a declining trend was observed in the subsequent years, with the total number of reported cases recorded at 1,658 in 2015 and 2,335 in 2016. Analysis of the pattern of offenses committed by juveniles revealed greater involvement in crimes such as kidnapping and abduction, theft, rioting, and cheating, as presented in Table 1 and Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1 : Trend of Juvinal deliquency in Bihar**

Bihar	2010	2014	2016
Murder	43	34	39
Culpable homicide not amounting to murder	3	1	0
Rape	26	43	41
Kidnapping and Abduction	71	273	297
Dacoity	16	3	10
Robbery	25	15	24
Burglary	33	36	47
Theft	150	643	594
Riots	67	107	197
Criminal breach of trust	0	20	3
Cheating	1	236	70
Counterfeiting	0	1	1
Other IPC crimes	258	2632	619
Total cognizable crimes	693	4044	2169

These juvenile delinquent behaviours are often associated with poor quality of life experienced by adolescents, including inconsistent discipline, stressful living conditions, and lack of effective communication within the family and society. The factors contributing to juvenile delinquency can broadly be categorized into social, cultural, and physical factors (Sarris *et al.*, 2000). The nature, intensity, and severity of juvenile offenses are largely influenced by the prevailing social, economic, and cultural conditions of a country (Goldstein *et al.*, 2013). Socioeconomic instability, poverty, unemployment, and social inequality may increase the likelihood of

juveniles becoming involved in delinquent activities. Various social factors such as disrupted family structure, inadequate educational background, low socio-economic status, peer pressure, and the influence of gangs and drug peddlers have also been identified as significant contributors to juvenile delinquency (Agarwal, 2018).

Further, rapid urbanization in developing countries, accompanied by increasing population density and social heterogeneity, has weakened traditional social relationships, social control, and community cohesion that previously regulated individual behaviour within society. Such changing social structures may contribute to the increasing involvement of juveniles in criminal and antisocial activities (Cox *et al.*, 2017). In addition, many migrant families move to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities and improved living conditions; however, due to the high cost of living and limited economic resources, they often continue to experience persistent poverty and economic insecurity. These adverse socio-economic conditions may compel children to engage in unlawful activities in an attempt to fulfill their basic needs and aspirations. Continuous exposure to such environments may gradually increase the risk of long-term involvement in delinquent behaviour. The influence of mass media also plays a significant role in shaping juvenile behaviour. Media representations that glorify violence and portray heroes achieving justice through aggressive or unlawful means may indirectly encourage adolescents to develop favorable attitudes toward delinquent activities (Lloyd, 2005). Furthermore, widening economic inequality and the growing gap between the rich and the poor may lead to feelings of social exclusion, deprivation, and identity crisis among economically disadvantaged youths. The stigmatization and symbolic exclusion of juveniles from mainstream society after committing offenses may further reinforce delinquent identities and contribute to the continuation of criminal behaviour.

Thus, on the above-mentioned relevance related to juvenile delinquency, the present review paper aimed to examine the major factors contributing to juvenile delinquency through an extensive review of published literature, research articles, books, and reports.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this study was to study the major factors contributing to juvenile delinquency

## METHODOLOGY

The present review paper was prepared through a systematic and comprehensive review of published literature related to juvenile delinquency and its contributing factors, with special reference to Bihar, India. Relevant information was collected from research articles, books, review papers, government reports, conference proceedings, and official publications available in both online and print sources. Secondary data regarding juvenile crime in Bihar were also obtained from reports published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Literature for the study was searched through academic databases and scholarly platforms such as 'Google Scholar', 'ResearchGate', 'JSTOR' and 'PubMed' using keywords including "juvenile delinquency, factors influencing delinquency, poverty and crime, school dropout, family environment, and adolescent behaviour.

The collected literature was critically examined and categorized according to major themes such as age, educational status, poverty, family conditions, emotional problems, peer influence, and socio-economic environment. Findings from various studies were compared, interpreted, and synthesized to identify the major determinants of juvenile delinquency and their implications for society. This methodological approach helped in developing a comprehensive understanding of the causes and contributing factors associated with juvenile delinquency in Bihar and other similar socio-economic settings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several studies have reported that the majority of juveniles identified as delinquents under legal standards belong to the 16–18 years age group (Shoemaker, 2018; Siegel and Welsh, 2017). During this developmental stage, adolescents experience greater independence and mobility and often remain outside the direct supervision of adults. Their increasing desire for autonomy, coupled with emotional instability and peer influence, may encourage involvement in antisocial or delinquent activities (Moffitt, 2018). Adolescents frequently seek immediate gratification and satisfaction of their needs and desires, which may lead to impulsive behaviour and poor decision-making. Due to immature emotional regulation and limited ability to foresee the consequences of their actions, many

juveniles become vulnerable to delinquent behaviour (Bartol and Bartol, 2019).

Educational attainment has also been identified as an important factor associated with juvenile delinquency. Research findings indicate that a large proportion of delinquent children possess educational qualifications below the matriculation level and often discontinue their schooling prematurely (Farrington, 2016). Poor academic achievement, low school attachment, and lack of participation in school-related activities contribute significantly to delinquent tendencies (Hirschi, 2018). Furthermore, emotional problems such as inferiority complex, jealousy, frustration, and feelings of social rejection are commonly observed among delinquent children (Agnew, 2015). Such negative emotional experiences may increase the likelihood of deviant behaviour among adolescents.

Socio-economic conditions, particularly poverty, have been widely recognized as major contributing factors to juvenile delinquency (Shaw and McKay, 2019). Studies have shown that most delinquent juveniles come from economically disadvantaged families where parents are often compelled to remain outside the home for extended periods in order to earn their livelihood (Siegel and Welsh, 2017). As a result, children may receive inadequate parental care, supervision, love, and emotional support. The absence of a nurturing family environment may lead children to develop feelings of neglect, frustration, and dissatisfaction (Bandura, 2018). Observing others enjoying a better standard of living may further intensify their sense of deprivation and resentment. Consequently, some adolescents may adopt deviant practices as a means of fulfilling their unmet desires and aspirations, eventually leading to delinquent behaviour (Merton, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

Juvenile delinquency is a complex social problem influenced by multiple psychological, educational, economic, and familial factors. The present review revealed that adolescents belonging to the 16–18 years age group are more vulnerable to delinquent behaviour due to emotional instability, impulsiveness, and increased independence. Poor educational attainment, school dropout, lack of interest in academic activities, and emotional problems such as inferiority, frustration, and jealousy were commonly associated with delinquent children. Poverty and economically disadvantaged family conditions emerged as major contributing factors, as

financial hardship often leads to inadequate parental supervision, lack of emotional support, and neglect of children's developmental needs.

### Recommendations and Future Direction

Children who grow up in unhealthy family and social environments are more likely to engage in antisocial and deviant behaviour to satisfy their unmet needs and aspirations. Therefore, prevention of juvenile delinquency requires a multidimensional approach involving parents, schools, communities, and policymakers. Providing quality education, emotional care, proper guidance, recreational opportunities, and a supportive family environment can play a significant role in reducing delinquent tendencies among adolescents. Early intervention and effective social support systems are essential for developing responsible, socially adjusted, and productive citizens for the future.

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