

Detach the Classroom from Delinquency – A Trend Analysis

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Abstract

All children have the right to be how they want to be until that maintains the social norms of the country, they live in. If it is violated, it becomes anti-social/unlawful behaviour technically termed Juvenile Delinquency. In the growth and development of children, during adolescent period children establishes a high rate of delinquency around the world. The population of adolescents aged between 10 and 19 is estimated as ~1.2 billion in the world which constitutes 14.8 percent of overall population of the world. Among these 1 million children are kept behind bars in response to involvement of unlawful acts as stated by UNICEF. The purpose of the study is to analyse the status of delinquency in India according to the age group of the children. A Desk research approach was adopted for the present study by utilizing secondary data. The data from 2001 to 2021 (21 Years) was collected from the National Crime Records Administration (NCRB) and India Registry. The findings of the percentage and trend analysis revealed that children between 16 and below 18 are potentially involved in anti-social activities and the rate of involvement increasing every year since 2001 which likely to be increased in future too. This alarms the stakeholders to take necessary steps to reduce delinquency among late adolescents. It is recommended that the teachers, especially Higher Secondary Teachers need to be equipped to provide proper guidance services to students since the teachers are expected high social responsibility and possess significant role in the behavioural and academic well-being of children.

Keywords: Adolescent Delinquency, Children in Conflict with Law, Well-being, Trend Analysis, Teachers, JJ Act.

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as any person under the age of 18 and emphasizes their equal rights without discrimination, as outlined in Article 2. Article 37 of the UNCRC specifically addresses the treatment of children in conflict with the law, stating that they should not be subjected to harsh punishments such as torture, imprisonment with adults, or capital punishment. The convention advocates for imprisonment to be used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible duration. India ratified the UNCRC on December 11, 1992, and subsequently enacted the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000 (JJ Act, 2000) in accordance with its principles.

Adolescence, recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as spanning from 10 to 19 years of age, represents a crucial period of physical, psychological, and social development. This

stage is characterized by significant changes in cognition, identity formation, social interactions, and a growing sense of independence and responsibility (Singh et al., 2019). Adolescence is also marked by increased risk-taking behavior, influenced by hormonal and neurochemical changes during puberty, which can lead to both physical and behavioral transformations.

The minimum age of criminal responsibility varies globally, typically falling between 6 and 18 years, with the age of majority often set at 18 years. In India, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act, 2015) sets the age of criminal responsibility between 7 and below 18 years. Prior to 2000, males below 16 years and females below 18 years were considered juveniles under the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986. However, the JJ Act, 2000 unified the age criteria, categorizing both males and females below 18 years as juveniles.

According to UNICEF's 2016 World Report, over one million young people worldwide, totaling 2 billion, are incarcerated. Many of these youths are deprived of education, meaningful activities, and regular contact with the outside world, often subjected to appalling conditions. In India, official government statistics reveal that two out of five children drop out before completing the eighth grade, particularly impacting marginalized communities based on caste, religion, and ethnicity, leading to early marriages or forced child labor (Human Rights Watch, n.d.).

Hirschi's social bond theory posits that all youth possess the potential for antisocial behavior, yet they are deterred by the social bonds they maintain with peers, parents, neighbors, teachers, and employers. Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2023) suggest that these bonds can serve as protective factors against delinquent activities. It is our collective responsibility to safeguard children from antisocial behavior, as it not only benefits society but also fosters national development, as evidenced by the influence of children's social relationships on their behavior.

Review of Related Literature

Youth gang members, in comparison to both the general population and juvenile offenders, exhibit notably higher rates of mental health issues such as conduct disorder/antisocial personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Young et al., 2017; Madden, 2013). Among Native American adolescents, low self-control emerges as a significant predictor of delinquency, while the impact of parental intervention varies between males and females, resulting in a reduction in female adolescent delinquency but an increase in males (Baek et al., 2020). Male children display significant links between childhood behavioral problems and subsequent drug use, delinquency, and encounters with law enforcement during adolescence, whereas females primarily exhibit connections with adolescent delinquency (Green et al., 2019). Materialism and egocentrism are identified as predictors of teenage delinquency, with materialism acting as a mediator in this relationship (Shek et al., 2020). The carrying of weapons is associated with violence, substance abuse, and property delinquency, with the effects of learned delinquent behavior persisting long after the cessation of carrying weapons (Emmert et al., 2018).

Chambers and Erausquin (2018) identified race, gender, perceived peer acceptance, and teacher discrimination as factors predicting delinquent behavior among students. Obsuth et al. (2023) found that students who developed strong bonds with their teachers at age 10 were less likely to engage in antisocial behaviors at ages 13, 15, and 17, suggesting that positive teacher relationships serve as protective factors against future criminal involvement, even years later. Additionally, Bae (2020) argued that teenagers who leave school for personal reasons exhibit lower levels of delinquency compared to those who drop out due to school-related issues, highlighting the importance of considering adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and school dropout as indicators of potential criminal behavior. Mathur et al. (2018) emphasized the critical role of school teachers

in rehabilitating and reintegrating students with emotional and behavioral disorders into the juvenile justice system, recommending the implementation of evidence-based practices by teachers to prevent further negative behaviors and repeated encounters with the justice system. Halldorsdottir et al. (2021) pointed out significant gaps in our understanding of how individual, societal, and biological factors interact throughout the lifespan, from early childhood to adolescence, influencing emotional difficulties and harmful behaviors during adolescence.

Through the intensive review of related literature, the researchers have identified, no study has been found that taken juvenile crimes of multiple years for consideration. No study has been found that adopt desk research and utilised secondary data of more than 20years to analyse delinquency to find its traces or pattern over the years. Hence, the researchers decided to fill this gap through this research study.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of the present study with which the researchers formulated the research design.

- To study the rate of adolescent delinquency in India from 2001 till 2021.
- To find the influence of age as a contributor factor on delinquency.
- To create awareness among the teachers about adolescent delinquency.

Research Questions

The following research questions, steers the entire research to address the research problem. Such as,

1. What is the present status of delinquency in India?
2. Which age group of children is very vulnerable to delinquency?

Research Methodology

For the current study, the researcher employed a desk research approach, utilizing secondary data. Data on charges imposed by the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special Local Laws (SLL) on juveniles apprehended, categorized by age group from 2001 to 2021, was collected from the official website of the National Crime Record Agency (NCRB), Government of India (Open Access). Subsequently, the data was tabulated and analyzed using Microsoft Excel (Version 2021).

Research Findings

The following are the outcome of the present research based on the gathered data from the NCRB, Government of India.

Table1 Age Group of Juveniles Apprehended under IPC and SLL Crimes in India from 2001 to 2021

Age Group (In Years)							
Year	7 – Below 12		12 – Below 16		16 – Below 18		Total
	No. of Juveniles Apprehended	(%)	No. of Juveniles Apprehended	(%)	No. of Juveniles Apprehended	(%)	
2001	3696	11.0	12729	37.9	17203	51.2	33628
2002	4488	12.5	13864	38.7	17427	48.7	35779
2003	3584	10.8	11687	35.1	18049	54.2	33320
2004	2107	6.8	12415	40.1	16421	53.1	30943

2005	1645	5.0	13090	40.1	17946	54.9	32681
2006	1595	5	12535	39	18015	56	32145
2007	1460	4.2	12114	35.1	20953	60.7	34527
2008	1281	3.7	12272	35.6	20954	60.7	34507
2009	1133	3.4	10741	31.9	21768	64.7	33642
2010	927	3.1	10123	33.4	19253	63.5	30303
2011	1211	3.6	11019	32.5	21657	63.9	33887
2012	1286	3.2	12063	30.3	26473	66.5	39822
2013	1330	3.1	13346	30.7	28830	66.3	43506
2014	872	1.8	11220	23.3	36138	74.9	48230
2015	602	1.4	11052	26.7	29731	71.8	41385
2016	637	1.4	10957	24.8	32577	73.8	44171
2017	514	1.3	10712	26.5	29194	72.2	40420
2018	382	1.1	9007	23.4	28867	75.5	38526
2019	467	1.2	9134	23.6	29084	75.2	38685
2020	291	0.9	8107	22.9	26954	76.2	35352
2021	284	0.8	8621	23	28539	76.2	37444

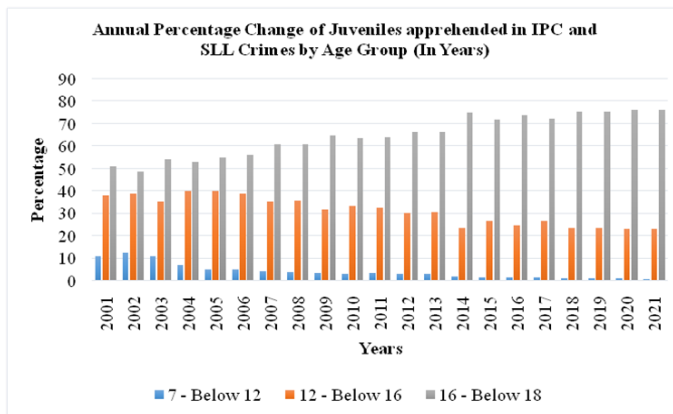


Figure 1 Findings of Percentage Analysis

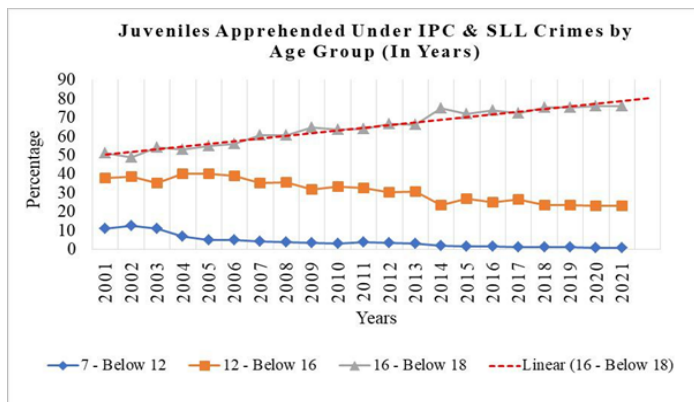


Figure 2 Findings of Trend Analysis

The percentage analysis findings (Figure 1) indicate that in 2001, there were approximately 3696 (11%) children apprehended in the age group of 7 and below 12 years, whereas the age groups of 12 to below 16 years and 16 to below 18 years accounted for 12729 (37.9%) and 17203 (51.2%) children, respectively. However, by 2021, the number of children apprehended in the 7 and below 12 years age group decreased to 284 (0.8%), while the age groups of 12 to below 16 years and 16 to below 18 years saw an increase to 8621 (23%) and 28539 (76.2%), respectively. The average annual change percentages from 2001 to 2021 were approximately -12.8%, -1.9%, and 2.5% for the age groups of 7 to below 12, 12 to below 16, and 16 to below 18 years, respectively. The percentage change differences between 2001 and 2021 were -92.3%, -32.3%, and 65.9%, respectively. Overall, the total number of juvenile apprehensions in India increased from 33628 in 2001 to 37444 in 2021, representing a 10.2% increase. The trend analysis revealed a negative slope for the age groups of children between 7 to below 12 and 12 to below 16 years from 2001 to 2021, while a positive slope was observed for the age group of 16 to below 18 years (Figure 2).

Discussion

This part attempts to answer the research questions taken for the study. Delinquency has become the global issue and it has to be reduced immediately. There should be a collaborative effort to address such issue. This study confirms that the children between 16 - below 18 are significantly involved in anti-social activities. Furthermore, the rate of involvement in delinquency continuously increasing each year, the findings of the trend analysis predicts that these rates of increase in delinquency would continue in future too. Besides, male children established extreme rate of delinquency than the female children. In 2000 juveniles apprehended between the age group of 16 and below 18 were 3301 while it was about 17203 in 2001 after the inclusion of male children aged 16 – below 18 years as per JJ Act, 2000. The change in percentage shows the crime rate of this age group increased by 421.1% in 2001 as compared to previous year. In 2021, it was about 28539 the difference between 2021 and 2001 is 11336 that represents the increase of 65.9% in the age group of 16 to below 18 years. This needs an immediate attention from the stakeholders to deal with. Adolescent is a critical stage in the growth and development of children’s lifespan where they would be at the state of emotional fluctuations which prevents them to think and make decisions cognitively, morally, and optimistically. During this stage they need proper emotional and moral support to cope up their negative emotions which leads them towards deviant behaviour.

Conclusion

Some theories of delinquency argue that, delinquency is a learned behaviour as youths interact with each other. Thus, no one is born criminal, personal undesirable experiences and social environment they surrounded by, influence children to learn and engage in criminal behaviour. Since teachers are expected to have a great role in the behavioural and academic well-being of children than others, they should be equipped to provide appropriate guidance and counselling services to detach the classroom from delinquency in future to create inclusive learning environment with harmony.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following to the stakeholders in addressing the adolescent delinquency. Such as,

- All teachers especially higher secondary teachers need to be equipped to provide proper guidance services to students to maintain their emotional well-being.
- Theoretical and practical based approaches should be implemented in the classroom to prevent juvenile delinquency.
- Awareness programmes and special trainings should be given to pre-service and in-service teachers regarding delinquency.

- Every year, a pamphlet/booklet contains data of juvenile crimes in graphical or any other picturised form should be issued to all teacher education institution and schools handling children from 7 to 18 years.
- Special attention should be given to adolescent children studying in higher secondary education.

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