
STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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“Every day, in a 100 small ways, our children ask, ‘Do you hear me? Do you see me? Do I matter?’ Their behavior often reflects our response.”

~ L.R. Knost

ABSTRACT

Juveniles becoming delinquent is a question for the nation, but more importantly for the environment and the family. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, specifically provides a framework for rehabilitation and adjudication; yet, the legal system is unable to reform a child or to prevent the commission of offenses when a crime has been committed by the juvenile. There is still a clear lack of preventive measures when it comes to counseling for parents, education based on values, morals, and ethics, and early intervention plans because these are the foundations upon which a child is rooted, both mentally and physically. Additionally, the influence of family, community, and society on adolescent/child behavior is often overlooked. This carelessness gives rise to many problems in children, like the way they behave, react, their impulsiveness, choice of friend circles, lack of confidence, and many more things, which eventually contribute to their delinquent behavior.

This research employs a mixed-methodology approach, an empirical study with 113 diverse stakeholders, including judges, educators, and legal professionals. The findings indicate a significant paradigm shift: while poverty remains a major factor, influences such as media impact (61.9%) and family dysfunction (55.8%) have emerged as the primary causes of crime. The paper concludes that while the 2015 Act is legislatively acceptable in intent, it is nonetheless institutionally deficient.

Keywords: *Juvenile Delinquency, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, Family Dysfunction, Crime Prevention, Child Rehabilitation, Cyber-Parenting*

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INTRODUCTION

A Juvenile is a child below the age of 18 years who has committed a crime. The legal safeguards for juveniles range between the age of 7 and 12 in India and approximately the same in the international arena.¹ When children and juveniles engage in illegal or antisocial behavior, it is referred to as juvenile delinquency. The term juvenile delinquency means when the child who is below 18, which means minor, does certain act or omission which constitutes a crime. But why does it happen? What are the causes of juvenile delinquency? In order to assess these psychological and philosophical questions, this research paper is aimed to answer these questions through empirical survey of various advocates, judges, SDMs, jailors, etc. It is imperative to highlight the root cause so that we can have a better foundation of youth in our country which will further lead to development of India as a whole and the psychological fulfillment of happy lives.

The Apprentice Act 1850, was the first act which dealt with vocational training for juvenile offenders. Then, the Indian Penal Code, 1860 was passed, which granted children under the age of seven complete immunity from liability under section 82, while children between the ages of seven and twelve were granted partial immunity under section 83, now in BNS, 2023 they are incorporated as Sections 20 and 21. The Reformatory School Act 1897 was passed to establish reformatory schools for boys under 15. In order to address delinquency, the Children Act of 1960 was passed, and several states passed their own child laws. The Juvenile Justice Act of 1986 and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act of 2015, were created for uniformity in India.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories in juvenile criminology are essential in determining the important and root factors, it relates and motives of the child criminality which are used for the purpose of developing intervention mechanisms for the prevention and rehabilitation measures.

Biological, psychological or sociological approaches explain why young people might disobey rules.

1. *Social disorganization theory*: Social Disorganization Theory discusses how social breakdown and community links cause crime and deviance, not individual moral

¹ Susan Young et al., *Juvenile Delinquency, Welfare, Justice and Therapeutic Interventions: A Global Perspective*, 41 BJPsych Bull. 21 (2017).

shortcomings.² It addresses that crime can be caused by certain structural variables in a community. Low economic position, ethnic diversity, residential mobility, and family disturbance are examples of structural factors. They contended that low-income neighborhoods are by definition devoid of sufficient funds and resources.³

2. *Strain Theory*: This theory states that People commit crimes because of pressure from socioeconomic reasons like poverty or inadequate education.⁴
3. *Differential association theory*: When an individual justifies doing of the act which results into crime is the main contention this theory holds. It states that when an individual associate himself with such an environment where the act per se is justified, it gives rise to criminality, the same happened as in the case of Nirbhaya where one of the accused said that it was normal in their locality to treat women as good for nothing.⁵ Imitation can be done by observing our parents, society, peers. Criminal behavior is picked up through conversation patterns with other people. Individuals become offenders by contacting with people who hold definitions favorable to breaking the law, learning techniques, motives, and attitudes. When definitions favorable to crime outweigh those encouraging compliance, criminality results.⁶

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015

Colonial interventions took place first through the Apprentices Act of 1850 and the Reformatory Schools Act 1897, aimed at reforming the children. The provinces and presidencies also followed this approach by incorporating the same principles along with the doctrine of *parens patriae*.

Classification of the Act

India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which led to the enactment of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. The act classified Children in

² *Social Disorganization Theory*, Simply Psychology, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-disorganization-theory.html> (last visited July 16, 2026).

³ Clifford R. Shaw & Henry D. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (rev. ed. 1969); Frederic M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* 281 (1963).

⁴ *Strain Theory*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/strain-theory-sociology> (last visited October 04, 2026).

⁵ The statement about victim blaming was made by convicted rapist Mukesh Singh during an interview for the documentary *India's Daughter*.

⁶ *Differential Association Theory*, Legal Serv. India, <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-1046-differential-association-theory.html> (last visited August 17, 2026).

India into two categories, Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) i.e. Children who are suspected of or allegedly involved in criminal activities prior to they attaining 18 years, and Child in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) which comprises all other orphaned, deserted, trafficked, abused, or otherwise in need children.

The act provides for preliminary assessment in case a child between the age of 16 and 18 has committed an offence which is heinous, means where the punishment of that offence is prescribed as minimum 7 years or above. Preliminary assessment is done with evaluating the child's physical and mental abilities, degree of understanding of consequences, circumstances of the crime, and whether the case must be passed onto for trial as an adult in a Juvenile Court.

Judicial Interpretation

Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Barun Chandra Thakur v. Master Bholu [(2022) 9 SCC 747 / 2022 LiveLaw (SC) 593]*, reviewed in depth the tricky Preliminary assessment process for whether the Juvenile Justice Board shall pass over to the Children's Court for an adult proceeding, the jurisdiction and the standard of Preliminary Assessment of whether 16 and 18 year olds children who face alleged for committing heinous crime can be tried by the children's court as adults or by JJBs itself as juveniles. The Court discussed the provision 15(1) which permits Board the discretion to seek expert opinion. This is to ensure when a JJB does not comprise any experienced psycho-therapist or psychotherapist, the court interpreted it such that the Board is mandatorily obligated to seek such expertise. While defining standard due diligence process the apex court held a critical difference between "the ability of the juvenile to commit the crime" and "ability of the Juvenile to comprehend its consequences". By citing neurobiology and science of development for their arguments, they highlighted that cognitive function such as decision making, risk taking and impulses will not evolve until the 20s, so even if younger age would surely comprehend to be dangerous this has to be accompanied by instant gratification of the act under peer-pressure and the consequences used as plural means one need to see not only Immediate or a Physical outcome from the act but also the ripple impacts for the family of the victim, for the child as well and society on the broader outlook. The Court directed Government and other authorities for making robust guidelines in regard to these assessments based upon NIMHANS notes and other similar research.⁷

⁷ Sohini Chowdhury, *Preliminary Assessment to Try Juvenile as Adult – JJB Should Mandatorily Take Assistance of Psychologist/Psycho-Social Workers: Supreme Court*, LiveLaw (July 14, 2022), <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/preliminary-assessment-to-try-jvenile-as-adult-jjb-should-mandatorily-take-assistance-of-psychologistpsycho-social-workers-supreme-court-203718>.

Building on the foundational principle established in *Barun Chandra Thakur*, the Supreme Court of India once again organized and normalized the adjudicatory process provided for under S.15 of the JJ Act, 2015 by directing in the case *X v. State of Bihar & Anr.* [2026 LiveLaw (SC) 702] that the preliminary assessment should not be transformed into a premature mini-trial, or a blind, mechanical, rote process. Guiding principles embedded in the framework include:

- a) the best-interest-of-the-child standard;
- b) a preference for restorative and rehabilitative justice over punitive measures;
- c) institutionalization as a last resort (favoring family-based care, adoption, foster placement, and community rehabilitation);
- d) the child's right to participate and be heard in matters affecting them;
- e) and an overarching commitment to dignity and non-stigmatizing treatment.

Relying on the principle of presumption of innocence and fair trial, the Apex Court ordered that Juvenile Justice Boards should apply their independent mind to all available material without any inference of the actual guilt or innocence of the child. Court held and clarified that there are four statutory elements, physical and mental capacity of the child, and his capability to understand the consequences of the offense and the circumstances of the offense stating that they were separate, independent and have to be assessed individually as well as collectively. Mental capacity wasn't just considered intelligence it was seen as a diverse pool including factors like emotional control, physical and learning developmental disabilities, ability to reason about and understand. Physical capacity broadened from simple walking/moving ability to objective scrutiny. And as for ability to comprehend consequences, the judges pointed to adolescent impulsivity, the need to act (with peer pressure, on friends' advice), as opposed to mere abstract knowledge about what could happen. Juvenile Justice Board has an obligation to equitably weigh the Social Investigation Report (SIR), in relation to the Probation Officer, and the Social Background Report (SBR) in relation to the Child Welfare Police Officer, together with school, study history and antecedents, in determining whether an accused in the given case should be treated as an adult.⁸ The precedent thus offers direct juridical support for the observations in the empirical survey that the 46% of stakeholders who observed that expert

⁸ Saima Anjum, *How Juvenile Justice Boards Should Conduct Preliminary Assessment Under S.15? Supreme Court Issues Guidelines*, LiveLaw (July 25, 2026), <https://www.livelaw.in/supreme-court/supreme-court-juvenile-justice-board-preliminary-assessment-guidelines-section-15-542792>.

opinions are taken “only” sometimes and 72.6% were pessimistic about institutional efficacy, owing to JJBs’ poor integration of diverse data, are right.

This framework marks a deliberate legislative shift from a purely welfare-oriented approach to a rights-based one, while simultaneously accommodating public demand for accountability in cases of serious juvenile offending a tension that continues to define debates around Section 15’s adult-trial provision.⁹

High Court for the State of Telangana in *X v. State of Telangana* vide judgement dated 06.12.2023 observed while passing a judgement that where in deciding as to whether a ‘Child in Conflict with Law’ should be tried as an adult ‘Children’s court’ would not re-write its jurisdiction or by giving due consideration, pass of orders in a mechanical manner accepting the Preliminary Assessment Reports of the JJBs and rather the legislative intent mandated giving consideration by the Children’s court on its own which as has to be a two-tier approach. “At first phase, assessment of the same should be done by the Juvenile Justice Board with the aid of expert opinions/Psychologists, then, Children’s court, while considering the report/recommendation of the Children’s board, would review the same, with due consideration of their physical and mental fitness, capacities and the nature of the offence.” In other words, both the forums i.e., Children’s Court as well as JJB are having an independent obligation. The High Court of Telangana was a strong proponent of this principle and even negated the widely held view that if no challenge to the order passed under Sec 15 is laid by a juvenile, the finding of transfer becomes conclusive and children court should not review it.¹⁰

The Himachal Pradesh High Court recently addressed the practical implication of psychometric testing, post-offence behavioral analysis and procedural timelines during Section 15 preliminary assessments in *V (a juvenile) v. State of H.P. (Cr. Revision No.392 of 2025 dated 28.07.2025)*. In this case of the alleged aggravated sexual assault by a 16-year old juvenile against a seven-year old child, High Court had upheld the decision of the Juvenile Justice Board and Sessions Court that juvenile needs to be tried as an adult in a Children’s court. The Bench of Justice Rakesh Kainthla considered two key legal questions surrounding S 15 first, whether time prescribed under Section 14(3) of the Act for completing preliminary assessment of three

⁹ Muktakesh Das & Surinder Kalyan, *Child Protection Framework in India: A Critical Analysis of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*, 8 Indian J.L. & Legal Rsch. 613 (2026).

¹⁰ Fareedunnisa Huma, *S.19 JJ Act | Children’s Court Can’t Brush Aside Independent Assessment to See If Juvenile Can Be Tried as Adult: Telangana HC Reiterates*, LiveLaw (Apr. 23, 2025), <https://www.livelaw.in/high-court/telangana-high-court/telangana-high-court-rules-children-court-independent-assessment-mandatory-juvenile-justice-act-290093>.

months for the purpose of S 14 is mandatory or directory; and secondly, how much evidentiary value shall be placed to clinical psychometric scores and child's behavior immediately after commission of offense. Assessing substantive criteria under S 15 of the Act, the High Court considered the evidence based on psychological testing (IQ level) conducted by expert Medical Board along with indicators of juvenile's behavioral cognizance that was crucial for satisfying Section 15 criteria, it noted that "Medical Board noted full scale IQ score of juvenile between 92-93 (i.e. Within normal range as per guidelines, his developmental parameters are age appropriate etc.) and had no abnormality in either sex/ any physical or mental incapacity." More importantly, linking this clinical finding with behavioral evidence of juvenile. "Juvenile intentionally intimidated seven year old child/victim and also warned such child about not to disclosure about event that had happened." The Court inferred that "it was with knowledge of illegality and immorality that the act was done. The adolescent juvenile understood its significance in society."¹¹

The critical interaction between the impact of digital media exposure, clinical psychological assessment measures and, legal prohibition on treating a juvenile as an adult for heinous crimes, was critically examined by the Allahabad High court in *Juvenile X v. State of U.P. & 3 Others* (2025 LiveLaw(AB) 266). This single-judge bench under the Hon'ble Justice Siddharth overturned consecutive decisions by Juvenile Justice Board and POCSO court to try a 16-year old juvenile as an adult in relation to sexual relationship with an under-age girl. The psychological reports indicated the juvenile's "low level border line of intellectual functioning" with 'IQ level between 62-66, along with deficits in his social development with his mental age as only 6 years.', And, "With the significant deficits in his social development, behavioral maturity, and in academic performance." The Court highlighted "the Juvenile Justice Board gravely errs when in spite of the availability of psychiatric reports highlighting intellectual and social deficits, it proceed to take a decision against the child on the ground that the offence involved in the case is a 'heinous one'. .. It has always been the emphasis under the JJB Act that commitment of a 'heinous' offense by a juvenile will not, on its own, render such a child or juvenile 'a predator on the prowl.' The reformatory intent underlying the amendment and more particularly, the introduction of the Nirbhaya amendment should be used as an exception rather than rule". Elaborating on societal impact of technology, Justice Siddharth echoed

¹¹ Mehak Aggarwal, *Himachal Pradesh High Court Upholds JJB's Decision to Try 16-Yr-Old as an Adult for Alleged Rape of 7-Yr-Old Girl*, LiveLaw (Aug. 7, 2025), <https://www.livelaw.in/high-court/himachal-pradesh-high-court/himachal-pradesh-high-court-ruling-trial-of-juvenile-as-adult-minor-girl-rape-case-300171>.

observations by the Bombay High Court in *Mumtaz Ahmed Nasir Khan v. State of Maharashtra* (2019), that “we find the effect of Television, internet and social media platforms has proved ‘disastrous’ upon impressionable minds and “loss of innocence” at a very early and tender age such’ harmful influence on younger minds is not possible to control even for the authorities”.¹²

It was authoritatively held by the Supreme Court of India in *Juvenile X v. State of U.P.* [2025 LiveLaw (SC) 989 / SLP (Crl.) No. 10915/2025], directing the State of Uttar Pradesh to file an affidavit on imparting sex education and puberty awareness to children through schools, the Court was told that schools only impart sex education under the NCERT curriculum from Class IX to Class XII (aged fourteen to eighteen). Rejecting the delayed framework by holding that children ought to be educated about sex and about what comes with puberty at an early age and in no case from class IX onwards, the apex court declared that children need to be educated about the hormonal changes that boys and girls go through. This educational lack has resulted in younger children being wholly unaware of what they are expected to be informed of while young adolescents continue to be in ignorance of what comes with puberty and therefore go to schools with the lack of awareness. The Supreme Court, asking educational authorities to wake up and initiate urgent corrective measures, was of the view that early and appropriate education on self-care and precautions as well as recognition of boundaries is what can curb risk-taking behavior of young minds and also protect impressionable child minds from developing delinquent tendency much before than what they do. The direction in *Juvenile X* judgment not only establishes schools as vital mechanisms for child protection but also reinterprets education itself as a preventative medium.¹³

CHILD IN CONFLICT WITH LAW STATISTICS IN 2024 WITH RESPECT TO NCRB DATA

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau’s Crime in India 2024 report (Chapter 5A: Juveniles in Conflict with Law)¹⁴ provides important context regarding national juvenile crime

¹² Sparsh Upadhyay, *Adolescents Losing Innocence Due to TV, Internet & Social Media; Govt Helpless as Nature of Technology Is Uncontrollable: Allahabad HC*, LiveLaw (July 25, 2025), <https://www.livelaw.in/high-court/allahabad-high-court/television-internet-and-social-media-are-having-disastrous-effects-on-the-impressionable-minds-of-the-adolescents-and-resulting-in-loss-of-their-innocence-at-a-very-early-and-tender-age-298710>.

¹³ Yash Mittal, *Sex Education Should Be Included in School Curriculum from Younger Age, Not Limited to Classes IX to XII: Supreme Court*, LiveLaw (Oct. 9, 2025), <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/sex-education-should-be-included-in-school-curriculum-from-younger-age-not-limited-to-classes-ix-to-xii-supreme-court-306326>.

¹⁴ Nat’l Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affs., Gov’t of India, *Crime in India 2024*, vol. II (2025), <https://www.ncrb.gov.in/uploads/files/2CrimeinIndia2024-VolumeII.pdf>.

data which will strengthen the research's motive as to identify the culture, context and roots of delinquency.

In 2024, the number of cognizable crimes under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) / Indian Penal Code (IPC) recorded against juveniles in Indian States and Union Territories was 27,649 and that of offences under Special and Local Laws (SLL) was 7,229, which reflects a total national crime rate of 7.9 per lakh child population. The analysis of the crime categories shows that the most frequently committed crimes by juvenile offenders are the crimes against the humans and the crimes against property. There were, in particular, 8,943 cases of offences against the body which included serious acts of violence such as 1,120 murders, 2,243 attempted murders, 3,959 cases of grievous hurt and 1,067 cases of rape.

Also, the Special and Local Laws had the highest number of cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act concerning sexual offences with 3,208 cases involving 3,563 juvenile apprehended, and 80 cases under the Information Technology Act with 99 juvenile apprehended, mostly in the 16 to 18 age group. These official statistics directly reflect the perceptions of primary survey respondents who identified digital exposure, hyper-sexualized online media as increasing catalysts for delinquency among children.

Educational attainment figures reveal acute vulnerability, Of the 42,633 juveniles apprehended nationally in 2024, 2,857 juveniles (6.7%) were completely illiterate, 8,989 (21.1%) had studied only up to the primary level, and 21,068 (49.4%) were educated between primary and matriculation levels, whereas only 1,418 juveniles (3.3%) had pursued education beyond higher secondary school. Significantly, regarding family background, 36,905 (86.6%) of the apprehended juveniles were living with their parents, 3,512 (8.2%) were living with guardians and only 2,216 (5.2%) were homeless.

This macro-level finding empirically validates that delinquency in India is mostly not the result of parental abandonment or homelessness; instead it operates in an active family unit where there is a lack of adequate parental supervision, moral and digital guidance, and structural socio-cultural strain.

Of a total workload of 87,329 juveniles under consideration in 2024 (including 44,696 cases carried forward from previous years), a striking 47,152 cases (54.0%) remained pending disposal at the end of the year. Of the cases disposed of by the Juvenile Justice Boards, 17,977 juveniles (44.7% of the dispositions) were released to parents after advice or admonition whereas only 10,286 juveniles (25.6%) were committed to Special Homes or Fit institutions.

The confluence of high pendency, limited expert psychological intervention, and the heavy reliance on simple admonition without structured plan for support of afterwards life reflects the fact that the current justice system often returns vulnerable juveniles to the very same unmonitored environments that caused delinquent behavior, emphasizing the need for comprehensive plan for afterlife of incarceration.

Also, according to the 2025 study of India Justice Report, over half the juvenile justice cases were pending in juvenile justice boards in 2023, a quarter have less than their full complement of a principal magistrate and two social workers and nearly one-third without an attached legal aid clinic. This systemic incapability seeps through the care support ecosystem, where the majority of Child Care Institutions do not have attached doctors or counsellors, 14 states lack designated ‘places of safety for older children charged with grave crimes’, and space for girls is particularly problematic¹⁵

EMPIRICAL DATA

Any legal framework’s effectiveness cannot be determined exclusively by its legislative provisions, especially one as delicate as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. An empirical component of the current study was carried out using a Google Forms-based structured questionnaire. An empirical study of 113 primary responses obtained from a structured survey intended for a variety of stakeholders, including the general public, educators, advocates, public prosecutors, magistrates, etc, are presented in this chapter. Twenty questions about demographics, awareness, views on punitive provisions, and qualitative recommendations for systemic reform were included in the poll.

Demographic Profile

Analysis by Gender and Maturity

1. 60.2% of the 113 responders were men and 39.8% were women (Fig. 1).
2. Age-wise, majority is in the 25+ age group (57.5%), followed by the 22–25 age group (27.4%) (Fig. 2).

¹⁵ Press Release, India Just. Rep., *Juvenile Justice and Children in Conflict with the Law: A Study of Capacity at the Frontlines* (Nov. 20, 2025), https://indiajusticereport.org/files/IJR_JJ%20Report_Press%20Release_20%20November%202025.pdf.

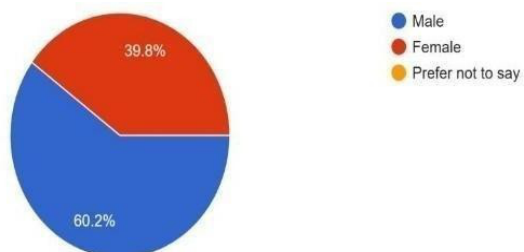
Gender
113 responses

Fig. 1

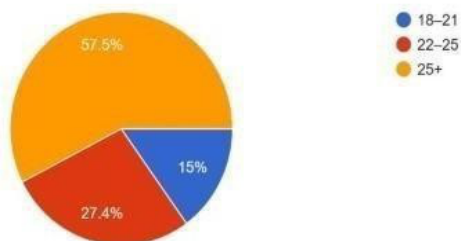
Age
113 responses

Fig. 2

Professional Standing

The majority of respondents were Advocates (42.5%), followed by Educationists (10.6%) and members of the Judiciary and Prosecution. (Figs. 3–6)

- Advocates: 48 Respondents (The largest single group).
- Judiciary/Prosecution: Including Judicial Magistrates, Executive magistrate (SDM) and Prosecution Officers.
- Teachers and Professors (12 respondents).
- Representation from the Police (DSP) and Jailors.

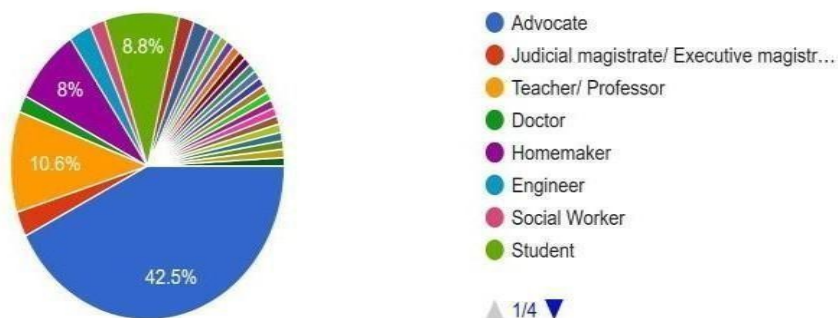
Profession
113 responses

Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Educational Attainment

A substantial majority has Postgraduate (55.8%) or Undergraduate (38.9%) degrees, establishing a strong foundation of literacy for the analysis. (Fig. 7)

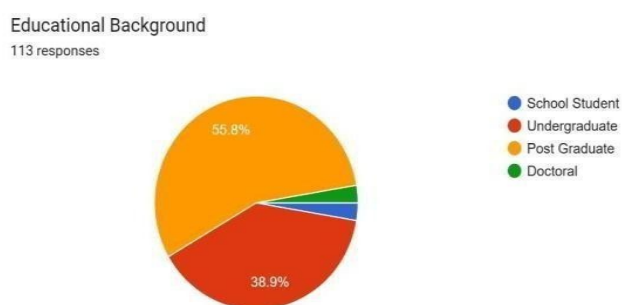


Fig. 7

Analysis of Legislative Adequacy

The survey data reveals a high degree of legal literacy among the respondents:

1. Awareness of the JJ Act, 2015: 85.8% of respondents confirmed their awareness of the Act. (Fig. 8)

2. Awareness of the 16–18 Year Provision: Similarly, 84.1% were specifically aware that juveniles aged 16–18 can be tried as adults for heinous offenses. (Fig. 9)

This high awareness indicates that the 2015 amendment which was a response to public outcry following the Nirbhaya case has been successfully communicated to the society including educated public and legal professionals. However, the 10-15% lack of awareness even among a highly educated sample suggests a gap in legal outreach that could be even wider in less educated demographics.

Are you aware of the juvenile justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015?
113 responses

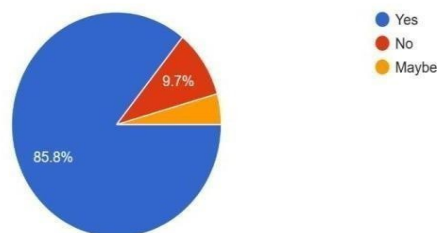


Fig. 8

Do you know that juveniles aged 16–18 can be tried as adults for heinous offences?
113 responses

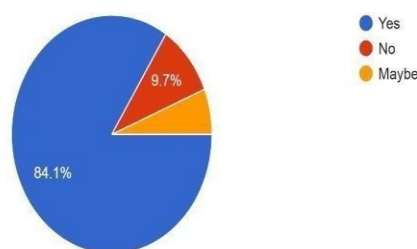


Fig. 9

Public and Professional Support for Adult Trials

One of the most contentious points of the 2015 Act is the provision allowing certain juveniles to be tried in regular criminal courts.

Survey Finding: 83.2% of respondents support this provision. (Fig. 10) This significant support reflects a shift in societal attitude from a purely rehabilitative model to a “Retributive-Rehabilitative” hybrid. From the standpoint of public mandate, this validates the “Legislative Adequacy” of the 2015 amendment.

Do you support the provision allowing juveniles (16–18 years) to be tried as adults in certain cases (heinous cases)?
113 responses

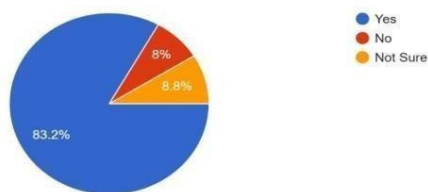


Fig. 10

Reliability of Preliminary Assessment

(Fig. 11) The Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) is required by law to conduct a “Preliminary Assessment” to ascertain a juvenile’s mental and physical capacity to commit a crime. 61.1% of respondents think this evaluation is trustworthy.

26.5% and 12.4% of respondents who indicated no and may be, indicated doubt. It implies that although individuals are in favor of adult trials, they are doubtful about the selection procedure.

Do you think the “Preliminary Assessment” (mental capacity test, mental and physical capacity to commit the crime, circumstances, ability to understand consequences etc) is reliable?
113 responses

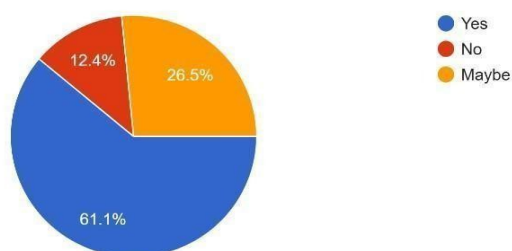


Fig. 11

Objectives of Juvenile Justice Act

This was an open ended question in which, over 90% of respondents stated that reformation and rehabilitation were the main objectives. 5.3% of respondents said that punishment was the only main goal. The majority of respondents favor Adult Trials as a punitive tool. The findings show that the Indian public generally supports the reformatory approach of juvenile justice. However, in cases of very serious offences, they consider adult trials is necessary. This suggests that in extreme cases, some juveniles are seen as less suitable for rehabilitation and more appropriate for trial under the adult justice system. (Fig. 12).

What do you think is the primary aim of juvenile justice?
113 responses



Fig. 12

Social Cultural Determinants

Poverty was frequently identified as the only cause of crime in conventional criminology. Empirical data, however, depicts a more complex, contemporary Indian reality. When asked to identify the primary reasons behind delinquency: (Fig. 13)

1. The majority of respondents indicated media influence (social media, reels, YouTube) as the top factor.
2. Family problems (abuse, broken homes): This was the second most important issue (55.8%).
3. Poverty and education came next, at 38.1% and 44.2%, respectively.

It implies that material deprivation (poor) has given way to psychological and digital exposure as Socio-Cultural determinants in the twenty-first century. From responses, many of whom are legal experts, believe that the “reels” and “social media” culture is the main factor normalizing aggressive and dangerous behavior in kids. According to Social Learning Theory, young people watch, absorb, and eventually mimic actions they witness online.

Exposure to Violent Content

Regular exposure to violent content, like in video games or social media, can cause desensitization, which the child to do violent acts without them thinking of the seriousness of harm or pain. The JJ Act, 2015 has historically concentrated on “unfit” parents or physical neglect (Section 2(14)). Adding digital neglect to this is now crucial. “Cyber-parenting” is defined as actively supervising a child’s online activities, including establishing limits, keeping an eye on material, and imparting digital etiquette.

A parent is putting their child in a “vulnerable environment” if they give them a smartphone but don’t monitor how they use it. There is a flaw in the way we identify Children in Need of

Care and Protection (CNCP) since the JJ Act does not specifically describe “lack of digital supervision” as a form of neglect.

The JJ Act was mainly designed to deal with physical conditions (poor, broken homes) and physical crimes (theft, assault). At the moment, it does not take into account: Cyberbullying, hacking, and digital grooming are examples of cyber-delinquency.

Algorithmic harm is the way that social media algorithms might influence a child who is already at risk to adopt violent or radical views. In order for the law to be “adequate,” it must be modified to incorporate digital restrictions that define digital safety as a child’s fundamental right and require platform accountability.

Erosion of Traditional Control

The family or school are frequently replaced by digital venues as the “primary agent of socialization.” The normalization of violence, skewed perspectives on relationships (caused by explicit content), and the “anonymity” of the internet, which diminishes a child’s feeling of responsibility, are examples of harm.

The JJ Act, 2015 fails to shield kids from the very real risks of the digital world since it concentrates almost exclusively on physical reality. The law is still insufficient because it does not acknowledge “Cyber-Parenting” as a requirement and “Violent Media” as a catalyst for criminal activity. To stop children from experiencing sociocultural trauma that is just as harmful as physical neglect, we must govern the digital realm.

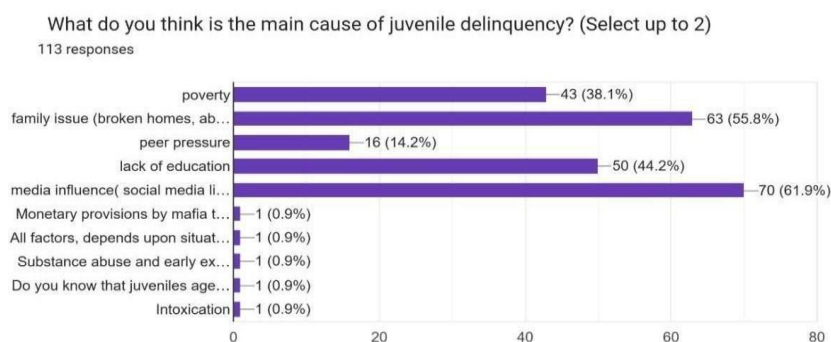


Fig. 13

The Family as a Micro System of Delinquency (Figs. 14 & 15)

According to the survey, there is almost uniform agreement that a child’s criminal tendencies are directly related to their socio-cultural background, particularly their peers and familial upbringing. This supports the “Social Control Theory,” which holds that children are more likely to do delinquent activities when their ties to their families and schools are weakened

(broken homes). According to statistics, respondents think that unless these family-level shortcomings are addressed, the legislative framework will not be successful.

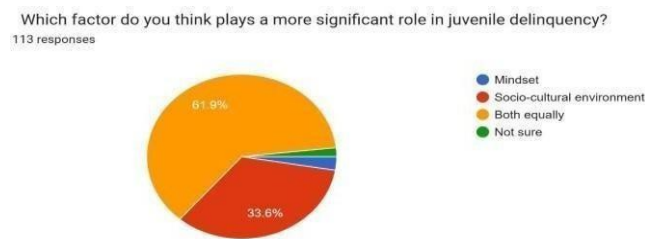


Fig. 14

Is there a relationship between socio-culture background(family, upbringing, environment, friends Etc) and juvenile delinquency?
113 responses

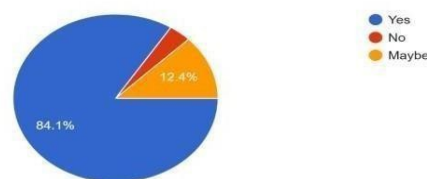


Fig. 15

Significant Factor

While responders think the “Environment” and “Mindset” both develops the delinquency, the law concentrates on both the “Nature of the Crime” and “background of the child”. This leads to a interpretation that we must equally need to treat the cause (root cause) as well as the nature of crime. (Fig. 16)

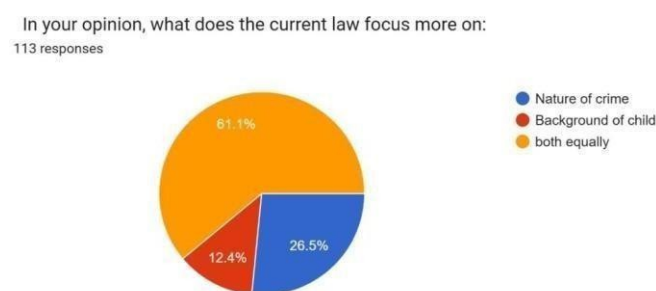


Fig. 16

Ideal Approach for Offenders

When questioned about the best way to deal with juveniles, data suggested that the most common approach was a combination of punishment and reform. A “soft” approach is not what respondents are requesting. They believe that a “Combination” reforming the environment while preserving the deterrent effect of the law is required. (Fig. 17)

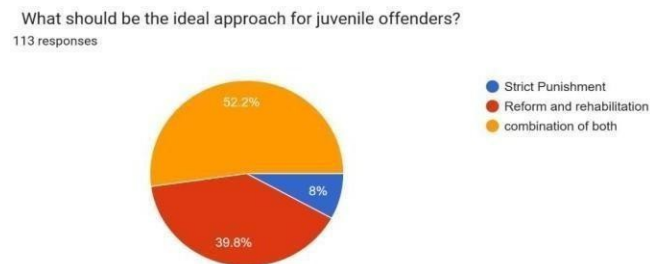


Fig. 17

Efficacy of Institutional Framework

The study's main focus is on whether the institutional machinery such as Observation Homes, Special Homes, and Rehabilitation Centers actually carries out its legal obligation to provide Care and Protection.

1. 27.4% of participants think that rehabilitation facilities and observation houses in India are effective.
2. 72.6% of respondents (who selected "No" or "Maybe") indicated uncertainty or disapproval for non-effectiveness.

On paper, the law is adequate for providing these measures, but practical data points to a significant Implementation Gap. Instead of viewing these houses as transforming settings, respondents, especially legal professionals, see them as detention facilities. (Fig. 18)

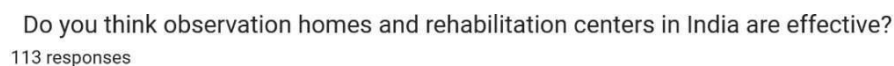


Fig. 18

Role of Expert Assistance

39.8% of respondents think that expert assistance is "Seriously taken." The truth is that 46% think it is only taken "Sometimes," and 14.2% think it is disregarded. Although expert advice is required by law, the practice appears to be not in consonance with the same. (Fig. 19)

Is expert assistance (psychologist, psycho-social worker) seriously taken by Juvenile Justice Board while doing preliminary assessment for adult trial?

113 responses

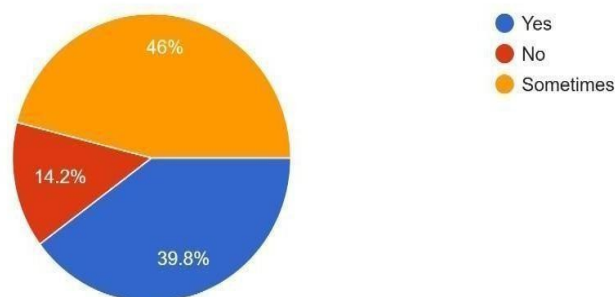


Fig. 19

Frequency of Adult Trials

In response to a question regarding the frequency of sending minors for adult trials, 37.2% of respondents think that trial for juveniles as an adult are less frequent. This suggests respondents are in favor of adult trials, but respondents find it not suitable to do it unless expert opinions are taken. (Fig. 20)

How frequent are juveniles sent for trial as an adult?

113 responses

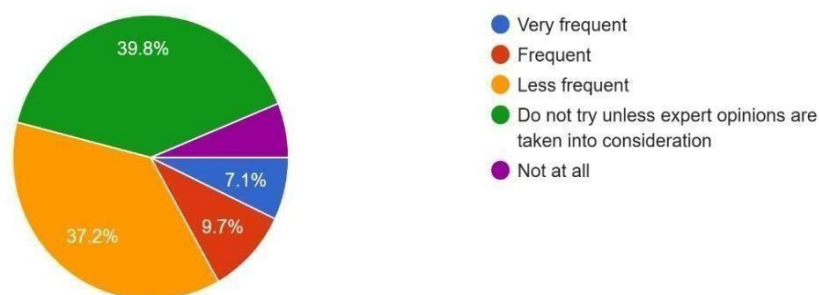


Fig. 20

Open Ended Answers

The underlying data is revealed by open-ended answers:

1. According to respondents, children are frequently sent back to the same environment, which results in little to no improvement.
2. Detention facilities were frequently accused of lacking trained staff, and structured programs necessary to effectively counsel.
3. There is failure to provide rehabilitation and counseling to the children. One advocate has said the prosecution officer will have no choice but to secure the conviction of the juvenile irrespective of whether they are innocent or not.

Institutional Inadequacy describes the state's inability to meet the JJ Model Rules' minimal standards of care. There are three ways that this insufficiency shows up: Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and the absence of distinct facilities for various age groups or categories of offenders. Lack of qualified social workers, psychologists, and vocational trainers gives rise to institutional inadequacy.

Recidivism

Since Detention homes lack the resources, it often results in juveniles returning to crime which establish a causal connection between recidivism and institutional failure.

1. First-time offenders "juveniles in conflict with law" stays in observation homes that lack supervision and positive activities. They are prone to learn criminal tactics by their peers rather than being reformed.
2. When a child enters and experiences abuse or neglect, they will grow up to have a defiant identity. They feel even more cut off from society after being freed, so turning back to crime is more of a survival strategy than a decision.

Why Delinquency Is Not Decreasing

The child returns to the same setting that first led to the delinquency, and the facility does not offer the child skills or mental health help. The crime rate will not change until the Correctional Administration is completely redesigned, regardless of how many progressive changes are made to the Act.

India's ongoing juvenile delinquency rate is a result of institutional execution rather than a failure of legislative purpose. The state's "Workshops" the Observation and Special Homes remain chronically neglected, despite the JJ Act, 2015 offering a reformatory "Tool." These institutions don't stop the criminal cycle; instead, they just put it on hold, eventually releasing the child back onto the streets with even more resilience.

Qualitative Synthesis

1. The Institutional Trap and the Failure of Reform (Legislative Inadequacy): The discrepancy between the law's institutional practice and reformatory ideology is the most significant criticism expressed by survey participants.
2. Children are frequently sent back to the same environment, same friends, same problems without real change, according to one respondent (an advocate), while

overcrowded institutions frequently expose them to a negative environment which can further deteriorate their behavior.

3. **The Adversarial Shift:** According to a major legal criticism, the JJ Board's choice of Public Prosecutors has brought an adversarial approach into what is essentially a welfare-oriented system. This implies that a move away from the Presumption of Innocence and toward obtaining convictions compromises the Legislative Adequacy (Section 3 of the Act).
4. **The Over-Reliance on Chronological Age:** According to respondents, the law is insufficient because it does not adequately account for mental maturity, intent, and nature of the crime in a nuanced manner. One recurring flaw noted by respondents is the over-reliance on chronological age (below 18 years) as the primary determinant of culpability. A one-size-fits-all age-based approach is becoming less and less relevant in the digital age, as kids are exposed to complicated information at a young age.
5. **Proposed Socio-Cultural Reforms: Beyond the Courtroom:** The 113 respondents' recommendations shift significantly from the Legal to the Socio-Cultural domain
 - (a) **The Education-Ethics Mandate:** Educational reform accounted for more than half of the recommendations. In order to detect at-risk youngsters early, respondents suggested that "personality and behavior parameters" be included in report cards.
 - (b) **The Digital Guardrail:** Respondents recommended a flexible, case-by-case approach that takes into account the child's degree of digital exposure, reflecting the previous evidence on media influence.
 - (c) **Strengthening the Family Unit:** In order to address the broken home determinant, several respondents stressed that the state must assist parents through counseling and support programs in order to help construct a stable family environment.

This chapter states that although the Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 has legislative adequacy in its expressed intent, institutional inadequacy and a lack of socio-cultural interventions seriously weaken it. Together, the 113 perspectives in this study imply that the pathogen the sociocultural milieu, media impact, and failing reform centers is being ignored while the law treats the symptoms, or the crime.

SUGGESTIONS

Legislative and Policy Reforms

The foremost legislative priority is amending the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The Amendment Bill, 2026 proposed herein addresses critical gaps in the existing law by introducing provisions on digital neglect, strengthening the Preliminary Assessment mechanism, mandating expert psychological participation in Board proceedings, establishing Uniform Disposition Guidelines, enhancing the powers of District Child Protection Units, and creating a National Integrated Juvenile Justice Data System, all aimed at transforming the Act from a document of legislative adequacy into one of institutional accountability.

Capacity Building of JJB

Juvenile Justice Boards are structurally undermined by the poor quality of their social worker members, who typically lack training in child developmental psychology and are unfamiliar with the Act's legal framework. Reform requires that JJB social workers hold postgraduate qualifications and complete mandatory orientation and annual refresher training covering child rights law, developmental psychology, and the standards set in Barun Chandra Thakur. Permanent access to certified child psychologists or psychiatrists must be ensured for all assessment and disposition functions. These requirements are to be funded through existing and ICDS budget lines without any new burden on citizens.

Standardizing CWC

The CWC and JJB currently operate in silos, despite the significant overlap between children in conflict with the law and those needing care and protection. A new cross referral protocol under proposed Section 30A would require the JJB to notify the CWC within seven days of a child being produced before it, and the CWC to submit a comprehensive report within fifteen days covering the child's family environment, economic conditions, school attendance history, and digital neglect indicators. The JJB must consider this report before issuing any disposition order. Every CWC is also to maintain a district-level Child Vulnerability Register accessible to JJBs, schools, DCPUs, and approved NGOs.

Youth Specific Police Units

Child Welfare Police Officers are typically untrained constables performing the role as an additional duty, lacking any grounding in child psychology or trauma-informed investigation.

The proposed amendment to Section 107 mandates that every CWPO hold a child-sensitive investigation certificate, that no child be interviewed without a CWPO and probation officer present, and that every police station maintain a designated child-friendly room equipped with appropriate communication aids. Real-time coordination between SJPU, the local JJB, and CWC is also mandated to enable same-day case communication.

Transition Observation Homes

Observation Homes across India function as de facto prisons overcrowded, custodial, and staffed without clinical expertise deepening the criminalisation of the children placed in them, as confirmed by both the empirical survey (72.6% of respondents rated existing facilities as ineffective) and the NCPCR's 2021 Status Report. The proposed reform mandates a shift to therapeutic residential centres with a permanent clinical psychologist, social worker, and educational counsellor for every twenty children; structured daily schedules combining academic instruction, vocational training, group therapy, individual counselling, and supervised family dialogue; and a complete architectural restructuring replacing mass dormitories with smaller family-unit living groups of up to eight children, each overseen by a qualified residential care worker.

Socio Cultural Interventions

What is the proposed Parent-Child Partnership Model? Grounded in Diana Baumrind's Authoritative Parenting theory and Agnew's General Strain Theory, the Parent-Child Partnership model is a legally mandated, community delivered engagement programme designed to interrupt the path from socio-cultural adversity to delinquency before it reaches the justice system. Its centrepiece is the Golden Hour, a mandatory daily period of one hour of structured, digital-free family engagement after the evening meal for all families with children aged six to eighteen. Rotating activities include Peer Awareness, Future Mapping, Rational Choice Training, and Empathy Building. The Golden Hour is to be operationalised through amendments to State Juvenile Justice Rules (making it mandatory in Individual Care Plans and probation orders), Gram Sabha resolutions under Panchayati Raj legislation, and compliance monitoring through Urban Local Bodies under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission. Non-compliance triggers counselling referral, not criminal prosecution.

Authority, Functions, and Proposed Changes: District Child Protection Unit

Currently a passive coordination body, the DCPU is proposed to be transformed into the district's active child protection hub through amendments to Rule 4 of the Model Rules, 2016.

The enhanced DCPU will have the power to conduct suo motu inspections of all child care facilities, issue temporary protection orders for at-risk children, direct schools to prepare Behavioural Report Cards, initiate referrals of pre-delinquent children to the JJB, and penalise non-compliant child care establishments. Functionally, it will maintain the Child Vulnerability Register, conduct quarterly community sensitisation programmes on child rights and digital safety, supervise CWPOs and probation officers, and prepare an annual District Child Protection Report. Minimum staffing a District Child Protection Officer, child psychologist, two social workers, legal officer, and data entry operator will be funded under the ICPS on a 60:40 Centre-State basis.

Community Based Prevention Programs

Drawing on Social Disorganisation Theory, community-based prevention is built around three pillars: first, Neighbourhood Supervised Recreation Centres to be established by every Gram Panchayat and Urban Local Body within three years, open daily from 4 to 8 pm and staffed by trained youth workers offering sports, creative arts, digital literacy, and peer mentorship; second, Juvenile Justice Committees at the gram sabha and municipality level, comprising a retired teacher, youth representative, ASHA worker, and parent representative, to identify at-risk families and monitor Golden Hour compliance; third, Peer Mentorship Networks under the proposed National Juvenile Justice Mentorship Registry, deploying young adults aged 22-30 from similar socioeconomic backgrounds as preventive mentors for children not yet in the system.

Awareness and Education

The school is the most powerful preventive institution available to any child, and the proposed programme, to be integrated into the mandatory curriculum from Class VI onwards through a National Curriculum Framework amendment by NCERT, delivers two structured modules of at least twenty periods each per academic year. The Child Rights and Legal Literacy module covers constitutional and UNCRC rights, the juvenile justice process, digital rights and responsibilities, cyberbullying, and the legal consequences of offences under the Act. The Mental Health and Emotional Literacy module covers emotional regulation, conflict resolution, peer pressure resistance, recognising abuse and neglect, and CBT-based self-care and stress management. Together they address both the legal ignorance and emotional vulnerability that are primary risk factors for adolescent delinquency.

Behavioural Report Card

A half-yearly, non-stigmatising Behavioural Report Card is to be completed jointly by the class teacher and school counsellor for every student from Class VI onwards. It assesses five domains social interaction, emotional regulation, academic engagement, digital behaviour, and home environment indicators and produces one of four outcomes ranging from no concerns to a DCPU referral for serious concerns. The Report Card is shared with the child's parents, the school counsellor, and where concerns are serious, the DCPU; it is not disclosed to police or courts unless the child is already before a JJB. It functions as an early intervention instrument, not a surveillance or penalisation tool.

A proposed amendment to Section 109, which currently offers only aspirational training language, mandates specific, time-bound, institutionally delivered training for every category of juvenile justice functionary: CWPOs must complete a forty-hour pre-appointment certification in child-sensitive investigation and digital offence recognition (Bureau of Police Research and Development with UNICEF India); JJB Magistrates must complete a twenty-hour module on the Barun Chandra Thakur guidelines and the RNR model before assumption of charge and annually thereafter (National Judicial Academy); Probation Officers must complete a sixty-hour certification covering social investigation, Individual Care Plan preparation, digital neglect, and the Golden Hour Protocol (National Institute of Social Defence); and Observation and Special Home staff must complete a forty-hour induction in child rights, trauma-informed care, and de-escalation techniques (State Social Welfare Departments with approved NGO partners).

Recognising that every child in the juvenile justice system is a constitutional rights-bearer and not merely a subject of state concern, and responding to empirical findings that adversarial dynamics in JJB proceedings are eroding the presumption of innocence, the Amendment Bill introduces a new Section 3A Rights of the Child in Conflict with Law. This provision mandates the right to be informed of proceedings in language the child can understand, the right to have the best interests standard applied and recorded at every stage, the right to a Social Investigation Report prepared by a trained social worker before any disposition order, and the right to challenge Preliminary Assessment findings by requesting an independent psychological second opinion at State expense. These rights function as a structural counterweight to institutional arbitrariness and as a safeguard for the rehabilitative mandate of the Act.

FINAL OBSERVATION

The seventy-three million adolescents between ten and nineteen who live in this country's cities, towns, villages, and digital spaces must balance family, school, peer group, poverty, aspiration, and an algorithmically curated online world that neither their parents nor their legal system understand. When some of these children break the law, the system should understand their developmental stage, socio-cultural formation, digital environment, unmet needs, and extraordinary, scientifically proven capacity for change. The 2015 Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act aims to be one. The child is now seen as a citizen whose failure is the state's failure and whose rehabilitation is the state's constitutional duty. Change from "Legislative Adequacy with Institutional Deficiency" to "Institutional Accountability with Cyber-Parenting Recognition" goes beyond policy language. It changes how the Indian government interacts with its youngest, most disadvantaged, and most deserving citizens. This research seeks to trace that shift. Finally, in the appendix section, the amended Juvenile Justice Act, along with the rules and behavioral report card has been inserted in order to take preventive measures and to secure the nation's most valuable assets our children.

APPENDIX: PROPOSED JUVENILE JUSTICE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The following draft is a proposed legislative model prepared by the authors for the purposes of this study. It is not an officially introduced Bill.

A**BILL****Bill No. x of 2026**

to amend the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 so as to incorporate provisions relating to digital neglect as a category of harm, to strengthen the Preliminary Assessment mechanism, to mandate expert psychological participation in Juvenile Justice Board proceedings, to provide for Uniform Disposition Guidelines, to confer enhanced powers upon District Child Protection Units, to establish a National Integrated Juvenile Justice Data System, and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-Seventh Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PRELIMINARY**1. Short title, extent and commencement**

- (1) This Act may be called the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2026.
- (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

AMENDMENTS TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015**2. Insertion of ‘Digital Neglect’ as a Recognised Category of Harm**

In section 2 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (hereinafter referred to as the Principal Act), in sub-section (14), after clause (xii), the following clause shall be inserted, namely:

‘(xiii) who is exposed to *digital neglect*, a child who is provided access to internet-enabled devices or online platforms without adequate parental supervision, digital literacy guidance, or protection from violent, pornographic, radicalising, or otherwise harmful digital content, and whose primary socialisation environment has been significantly shaped by unsupervised digital

exposure in a manner that poses a risk to the child's moral, psychological, or behavioural development.'

3. Mandatory Qualifications and Psychological Support for JJB Social Workers

In section 4 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (3), the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:

‘(3A) The two social worker members of every Juvenile Justice Board shall

- (a) hold a postgraduate qualification in social work, psychology, child development, or a related discipline from a recognised university;
- (b) have completed the mandatory orientation training prescribed under section 109 of this Act before assuming duties; and
- (c) have access, on a permanent retainer basis, to a qualified child psychologist or child psychiatrist registered with the Rehabilitation Council of India or any equivalent statutory body, for the purposes of assessments under sections 15 and 18 of this Act.’

4. Mandatory Contents of the Social Investigation Report

In section 13 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (1), the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:

‘(1A) Every Social Investigation Report prepared under sub-section (1) shall mandatorily contain findings on

- (a) the socio-cultural background of the child, including family environment, economic circumstances, and educational history;
- (b) any history of abuse, neglect, or digital neglect as defined in clause (xiii) of sub-section (14) of section 2; and
- (c) the child's digital environment, including access to internet-enabled devices, supervision by parents or guardians, and any evidence of harmful digital exposure.

The Social Investigation Report shall be prepared by a trained probation officer and shall be placed before the Board not later than fifteen days from the date the child is first produced before the Board.’

5. Strengthening the Preliminary Assessment Mechanism

In section 15 of the Principal Act,

In sub-section (1), after the words ‘mental and physical capacity to commit such offence,’ the following proviso shall be inserted, namely:

‘Provided that no Preliminary Assessment shall be conducted or relied upon unless

- (a) a written report by a qualified child psychologist or child psychiatrist, registered with the Rehabilitation Council of India or any equivalent statutory body, has been placed before the Board prior to the commencement of the assessment; and
- (b) the Board has recorded specific findings on the socio-cultural background of the child, the family environment, the child’s educational history, and any history of abuse, neglect, or digital neglect, before arriving at a determination under this section;’

for sub-section (2), the following sub-section shall be substituted, namely:

‘(2A) The Board shall be guided primarily by the best interests of the child and shall not transfer a child to a Children’s Court unless it is satisfied, on the basis of expert psychological assessment and social investigation, that no rehabilitative intervention available under this Act would be adequate to address the needs of the child and the interests of society.’;

and after sub-section (2), the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:

‘(3) The Board shall record reasons in writing for every order made under sub-section (1), and a copy of such reasons shall be furnished to the child’s legal representative and to the child’s parents or guardian within forty-eight hours of the order.’

6. Uniform Disposition Guidelines

In section 18 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (1), the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:

‘(1A) The Central Government shall, in consultation with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, publish Uniform Disposition Guidelines setting out the factors to be considered and the weight to be assigned to each factor in making disposition orders under this section, including

- (a) the nature and gravity of the offence;
- (b) the age and developmental stage of the child;
- (c) the socio-cultural background of the child, including family environment, educational history, and economic circumstances;
- (d) the digital environment in which the child has been raised, including any exposure to harmful digital content and the adequacy of parental supervision of online activity;
- (e) any history of abuse, neglect, or victimisation;
- (f) the availability of appropriate community-based rehabilitation resources; and
- (g) the child's own wishes and the views of the child's family, to the extent ascertainable.

Such Guidelines shall be binding on all Juvenile Justice Boards and Children's Courts and shall be reviewed and updated at intervals of not more than three years.'

7. Rights of the Child in Conflict with Law

After section 3 of the Principal Act, the following section shall be inserted, namely:

'3A. Rights of child in conflict with law.—Every child in conflict with law shall have the following rights, namely:—

- (a) the right to be informed of the proceedings in language and manner comprehensible to the child;
- (b) the right to have the best interests standard applied at every stage of the proceedings, with the Board recording written findings on best interests in every order;
- (c) the right to have a Social Investigation Report prepared with the assistance of a trained social worker before any disposition order is made under section 18; and
- (d) the right to challenge findings of a Preliminary Assessment under section 15 by requesting an independent psychological second opinion from the Board, which the Board shall arrange at State expense.'

8. Mandatory Cross-Referral between the Juvenile Justice Board and the Child Welfare Committee

After section 30 of the Principal Act, the following section shall be inserted, namely:

‘30A. Mandatory Cross-Referral between the Juvenile Justice Board and the Child Welfare Committee

- (a) Within seven days of any child being produced before a Juvenile Justice Board, the Board shall issue a notice to the concerned Child Welfare Committee requesting a report on whether the child is also a child in need of care and protection within the meaning of section 2(14).
- (b) The Child Welfare Committee shall respond within fifteen days with a report covering the child’s family environment, economic conditions, school attendance history, and any indicators of digital neglect as defined in clause (xiii) of sub-section (14) of section 2.
- (c) The Board shall be required to consider the report of the Child Welfare Committee before making any disposition order under section 18.
- (d) Every Child Welfare Committee shall maintain a district-level Child Vulnerability Register, being a real-time database of children identified as at-risk, accessible to the Juvenile Justice Board, schools, District Child Protection Units, and approved nongovernmental organisations operating in the district.’

9. Mandatory Standards for Child Welfare Police Officers

In section 107 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (3), the following sub-sections shall be inserted, namely:

‘(3A) Mandatory Standards for Child Welfare Police Officers

Every Child Welfare Police Officer designated under this section shall

- (a) hold a certificate in child-sensitive investigation issued by the Bureau of Police Research and Development or an equivalent State-level body before assuming duties;
- (b) ensure that no child in conflict with law is interviewed at a police station without the simultaneous presence of the Child Welfare Police Officer and a probation officer;
- (c) ensure that every police station maintains a designated child-friendly room, separate from adult lock-ups, furnished appropriately and equipped with child-appropriate communication aids; and

- (d) maintain a real-time coordination channel with the local Juvenile Justice Board and Child Welfare Committee, enabling same-day communication on cases involving children.’

10. Mandatory Training Requirements for All Juvenile Justice Functionaries

In section 109 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (1), the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:

‘(1A) Mandatory Training Requirements for All Juvenile Justice Functionaries

The following mandatory training requirements shall apply to all persons functioning within the juvenile justice system:

- (a) every Child Welfare Police Officer shall complete a mandatory forty-hour pre-appointment certification course in child-sensitive investigation, trauma-informed interviewing, the legal framework of this Act, and digital offence recognition, delivered by the Bureau of Police Research and Development in collaboration with UNICEF India;
- (b) every Magistrate appointed to a Juvenile Justice Board shall complete, before assumption of charge and annually thereafter, a twenty-hour module on the guidelines prescribed by the Supreme Court in *Barun Chandra Thakur v. Master Bholu* [(2022) 9 SCC 747] and the Risk-Need-Responsivity model of rehabilitation, delivered by the National Judicial Academy;
- (c) every probation officer shall complete a mandatory sixty-hour certification course in social investigation methodology, Individual Care Plan preparation, digital neglect indicators, and the Golden Hour Protocol as specified in the rules made under this Act, delivered by the National Institute of Social Defence; and
- (d) every member of the staff of an Observation Home or Special Home shall complete a mandatory forty-hour induction training in child rights, trauma-informed care, de-escalation techniques, therapeutic residential care principles, and mandatory reporting obligations, delivered by the State Social Welfare Department in collaboration with an approved non-governmental organisation partner.’

11. National Integrated Juvenile Justice Data System

After section 109 of the Principal Act, the following section shall be inserted, namely:

‘109A. National Integrated Juvenile Justice Data System

- (1) The Central Government shall, in consultation with the National Informatics Centre and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, establish a web-based, encrypted, case-level database to be known as the National Integrated Juvenile Justice Data System (hereinafter referred to as the NIJJDS) for the purpose of evidence-based monitoring and policy review under this Act.
- (2) Every Juvenile Justice Board, Child Welfare Committee, Observation Home, Special Home, and District Child Protection Unit shall update the NIJJDS within forty-eight hours of any significant event in a child’s case.
- (3) The NIJJDS shall be accessible, subject to appropriate privacy protections, to
 - (a) authorised members of Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees;
 - (b) District Child Protection Units;
 - (c) State-level monitoring bodies and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights; and
 - (d) approved academic researchers under a data access protocol to be specified in the rules made under this Act.
- (4) The NIJJDS shall be financed through the existing Digital India programme budget on a sixty-forty basis between the Central Government and the State Governments under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme.’

THE SCHEDULE**BEHAVIOURAL REPORT CARD**

School: _____ Class: _____ Roll No _____ Academic Year: _____
Student Name: _____

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Healthy peer group/ friend circle []

Shows conflict with peers []

Shows empathy and cooperation []

Bully or intimidatory behaviour []

Behaviour towards teachers []

Shows disrespect or defiance toward authority []

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Control over emotions []

Shows excessive anger or aggression []

Recovers from failure in exams or sports etc []

Sadness, low confidence, less engaging in activities []

Exhibits impulsive or risk-taking behaviour []

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

Attends school regularly []

Unexplained absences (specify: days) []

Assignment completion on time []

Participates actively in class []

Disinterest towards academic work or not participating in extra curricular activities []

DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR

Uses school devices responsibly []

Accesses inappropriate content on school devices []

Does not exhibit signs of online victimisation []

Exhibits signs of cyberbullying []

No signs of screen addiction []

Exhibits signs of excessive or compulsive screen use []

HOME ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS (as reported by child or observable)

Stable and supportive home environment []
Reports or exhibits signs of family conflict []
No indicators of neglect []
Indicators of physical, emotional, or digital neglect observed[]
No indicators of economic distress []
Indicators of significant economic hardship[]

OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

No concerns identified []
Mild concerns parental meeting recommended []
Moderate concerns school counsellor intervention recommended []
Serious concerns District Child Protection Unit referral recommended []

Teacher's Signature: _____

Counsellor Signature:

Date:

Principal's Endorsement: _____