
NAVIGATING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN INDIA: CAUSATION AND STRUCTURED PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency has emerged as one of the most serious social and legal challenges in India, affecting not only young offenders but also their families, victims and society at large. Criminal behaviour among juveniles creates deep-rooted psychological, social and economic consequences. While victims of crime are the most visible sufferers, the families of juvenile offenders also endure stigma, emotional suffering and financial instability. In several instances, juveniles involved in heinous crimes such as rape, murder and robbery exhibit psychological disorders, unstable family environments and substance dependency. Regular exposure to alcohol, drugs and criminal surroundings at an early age increases the likelihood of repeated offending. This research paper critically examines the psychological, social and legal dimensions of juvenile delinquency in India. It further analyses the juvenile justice system, the judicial approach to determining juvenility and the procedural safeguards available to juveniles, with reference to important judicial decisions. The study also traces the historical evolution of juvenile justice legislation in India and emphasises the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration rather than retribution.³

Keywords: Child, Juvenile, Delinquency, Crime, Juvenile Justice Law.

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³ P Yadav, 'Juvenile Delinquency as a Behavioural Problem' (2016) *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, pp 5-8

1.1 Introduction

Juvenile delinquency refers to criminal or antisocial behaviour committed by individuals below the age of eighteen years. In recent decades, the incidence of juvenile crime has increased markedly owing to rapid urbanisation, the weakening of family structures, peer pressure, exposure to violence, and the absence of adequate educational and moral guidance. In cases involving serious offences such as murder, rape, and armed robbery, juveniles may be transferred to adult courts after careful legal scrutiny of their mental capacity, age, prior criminal history, and the gravity of the offence. Several countries have also amended their juvenile justice laws to adopt a stricter approach toward violent juvenile offenders; in simple terms, juvenile delinquency denotes the participation of minors in unlawful activities. Thus, a juvenile offender may be understood as a person who has not attained eighteen years of age but who commits an act that would attract criminal liability if committed by an adult. Although delinquency does not occur in every adolescent, it often emerges during the turbulent period of adolescence as a result of emotional instability and identity conflicts. Childhood and adolescence are transitional stages marked by rapid physical, emotional, moral, and social development, during which children frequently experience mood swings, anxiety, insecurity, and confusion. These psychological disturbances may sometimes propel them toward deviant behaviour as a form of emotional expression or as a means of achieving social acceptance, and consequently some juveniles drift away from socially accepted norms and are classified as delinquent. Delinquent juveniles are generally regarded as socially maladjusted children and may display persistent deviant behavioural patterns, and since their conduct violates both legal and moral standards, they become subject to legal intervention. However, in legal theory, juveniles are not treated as hardened criminals, but as persons in need of reformation and rehabilitation. Therefore, juvenile delinquency is not only a legal problem but also a profound social and psychological issue requiring corrective intervention rather than punitive punishment.⁴

A juvenile or child is a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years and is presumed to lack full mental maturity to understand the distinction between right and wrong. The principle of *doli incapax*, meaning incapability of committing a crime due to lack of understanding, plays a crucial role in determining the criminal responsibility of children. Under criminal law, children between the ages of 7 and 12 years can be held liable only if it is proven

⁴ H C Black, *Black's Law Dictionary* (5th edn, West Publishing 1981)

that they possessed sufficient maturity to comprehend the nature and consequences of their actions.⁵Section 2(12) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, has defined the term “child” a child means any person who has not completed eighteen years of age. The Act further classifies children into two distinct categories:

- Child in conflict with law-a child accused of committing an offence.
- Child in need of care and protection-a child who is abandoned, neglected, abused, exploited or otherwise vulnerable.

Legally speaking, a juvenile is a minor who has not attained the age at which he or she can be held criminally accountable in the same manner as an adult. The term “juvenile” is mainly used in criminal jurisprudence, whereas the term “minor” is used in civil law in relation to legal capacity. The definition of a juvenile varies from country to country depending upon the domestic legal framework. Further under the Children Act, 1960, the definition of a child differed on the basis of gender. A boy below sixteen years and a girl below eighteen years were treated as children. However, this distinction was later abolished through progressive legislation. The definition of the child was further defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 defines a child as anyone below the age of eighteen years unless majority is attained earlier under national legislation.

The brutal *Nirbhaya Gang Rape Case of 2012*, marked a turning point in India’s juvenile justice policy. One of the accused was just a few months short of attaining majority, which triggered massive public outrage and legal debate. This incident ultimately led to the enactment of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which introduced special provisions for juveniles involved in heinous offences.⁶

1.2 Claim of Juvenility

The claim of juvenility is one of the most debated issues under juvenile justice law. It refers to the legal right of an accused person to claim that he or she was a minor on the date of commission of the offence. This claim may be raised at any stage of the proceedings, even after the final disposal of the case. Such right can be exclusively determined by the Juvenile

⁵ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 SS 20-21

⁶ *Mukesh v State (NCT of Delhi)* (2017) 6 SCC 1

Justice Board (JJB). The Board is required to examine documentary evidence such as birth certificates, school admission registers and medical age-determination reports in accordance with Rule 12 of the Juvenile Justice Rules, 2007.

In Kulai Ibrahim v. State of Coimbatore, the Supreme Court held that under Section 9 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, a claim of juvenility can be raised at any stage of judicial proceedings, even after conviction.⁷

In Deoki Nandan Dayma v. State of Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court ruled that the date of birth recorded in the school admission register is reliable evidence for determining the age of a juvenile.⁸

Similarly, in *Satbir Singh v. State of Haryana*, the Court emphasised that school records must be given due importance while determining juvenility.⁹

1.3 Meaning of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency refers to the participation of children below the ages of 18 in unlawful or antisocial activities. It involves behaviour that deviates from socially accepted norms and legal standards. A juvenile delinquent is a minor who engages in conduct that is harmful to society or to himself. Such behaviour may range from minor misconduct to serious violent crimes.

In *Gopinath Ghosh v. State of West Bengal*, the Supreme Court allowed the plea of juvenility to be raised for the first time before the Court and directed a fresh inquiry for determination of age.¹⁰

In *Rajinder Chandra v. State of Chhattisgarh*, the Supreme Court held that the standard of proof for determining the age of a juvenile is preponderance of probability, not proof beyond reasonable doubt.¹¹

Further, in *Krishna Bhagwan v. State of Bihar*, the Court ruled that the relevant date for

⁷ *Kulai Ibrahim v State of Coimbatore* (2014) 10 SCC 472.

⁸ *Deoki Nandan Dayma v State of Uttar Pradesh* (1996) 3 SCC 575.

⁹ *Satbir Singh v State of Haryana* (2013) Punjab & Haryana HC.

¹⁰ *Gopinath Ghosh v State of West Bengal* (1984) 1 SCC 254.

¹¹ *Rajinder Chandra v State of Chhattisgarh* (2002) 2 SCC 287.

determining juvenility is the date of commission of the offence.¹²

However, this view was later reconsidered in *Arnit Das v. State of Bihar*, where it was held that the date for deciding the claim of juvenility would be the date on which the accused is produced before the competent authority.¹³

1.4 Acts of Delinquency

Acts of delinquency include a wide range of behaviours that violate legal norms or accepted social standards. Juvenile delinquency does not only involve serious crimes such as murder, rape, theft and robbery, but also includes habitual disobedience, truancy, running away from home, use of abusive language, substance abuse, gambling and other disorderly behaviours. Such activities indicate early signs of deviance and may gradually lead to serious criminal tendencies if not controlled at the initial stage.¹⁴

Some common acts of delinquency include:

- Leaving home without parental permission
- Uncontrollable and aggressive behaviour
- Spending long hours aimlessly on the streets
- Using obscene or abusive language
- Sexual offences
- Gambling and visiting casinos

These patterns of behaviour indicate emotional dissatisfaction, lack of supervision, peer pressure and inadequate moral guidance. When such conduct becomes repetitive, it transforms into habitual delinquency requiring legal and social intervention.¹⁵

¹² *Krishna Bhagwan v State of Bihar* (2002) 9 SCC 247.

¹³ *Arnit Das v State of Bihar* (2000) 5 SCC 488.

¹⁴ P Haveripet, 'Causes and Consequences of Juvenile Delinquency in India' (2013) *Recent Research in Science and Technology*. Pp 29-30

¹⁵ E H Johnson, *Crime, Correction and Society* (Dorsey Press, 1978).

2.1 Historical Background of Juvenile Justice in India

Prior to the enactment of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, the principal legislation governing juvenile offenders in India was the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986, which came into force on 2 October 1987. Even earlier, the Children Act, 1960 existed as the earliest post-independence legal framework for the protection of children, although its scope was largely confined to the Union Territories. Before independence, the juvenile justice system was shaped by British legislation, including the Apprentice Act of 1850, the Reformatory Schools Act of 1897, and provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898, which collectively established the principle that children in conflict with law should be treated distinctly from adult offenders. The Indian Jail Committee, 1920, further reinforced the need for separate handling of juvenile offenders. The Indian Jail Committee, 1920 also strongly recommended the separate handling of juvenile offenders.¹⁶ After independence, the Indian Constitution strengthened child-related safeguards through various provisions, including Articles 15(3), 21A, 24, 39(e)–(f), 45, and 47, which together provide the constitutional foundation for child welfare and protection. The Children Act, 1960 therefore represented a substantial shift in child protection law by prohibiting the imprisonment of children and mandating provisions for their care, protection, education, treatment, and rehabilitation, while also introducing institutional mechanisms to support these objectives.

- Children's Homes for neglected children
- Special Schools for delinquent children
- Observation Homes for juveniles awaiting trial

However, this Act applied only to Union Territories, leading to non-uniformity across India. As a signatory to the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959, India felt the need for uniform juvenile legislation throughout the country. This resulted in the enactment of the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986, which aimed to create a comprehensive and uniform juvenile justice framework across India.¹⁷

¹⁶ Indian Jail Committee Report (1920). P 365

¹⁷ The Children Act, 1960 (Act No. 60 of 1960).

2.2 Evolution of Juvenile Justice Laws in India

The Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 introduced a reformatory approach toward juvenile offenders by focusing on care, protection, treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment. However, inconsistencies remained due to changing global standards. India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, which necessitated further reforms. Consequently, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 was enacted, replacing the 1986 Act. This legislation adopted the uniform age of 18 years for both boys and girls and formally introduced the terminology:

- “Child in conflict with law”
- “Child in need of care and protection”

Under this Act, Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) were established to deal with children accused of offences, while Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) were entrusted with the responsibility of protecting vulnerable children. The Act was amended in 2006 to clarify that the date of commission of the offence would be the decisive factor for determining juvenility. The amendment also reinforced that no juvenile could be kept in a police station or jail under any circumstances. Regular review of pending cases by judicial magistrates was also made mandatory.¹⁸ Following the public outrage over the Nirbhaya case (2012), the legislature introduced the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. This Act brought a significant shift by allowing juveniles aged 16–18 years to be tried as adults for heinous offences, after a preliminary assessment of their mental and physical capacity by the Juvenile Justice Board. This marked a transition from a purely welfare-based approach to a mixed approach combining rehabilitation with accountability.¹⁹ In addition to the JJ Act, several complementary laws and policies now exist for child protection, including:

- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO)
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act
- POCSO Amendment Act, 2019

¹⁸ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2006.

¹⁹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (Act No. 2 of 2016).

- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
- National Child Labour Policy.

Together, these laws form a comprehensive legal framework to ensure the safety, dignity and rehabilitation of children in India.²⁰

3.1 Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

Understanding the causes of juvenile delinquency is essential for developing effective preventive and corrective strategies. Juvenile delinquency does not arise due to a single factor; rather, it is the result of the interaction of multiple social, psychological, economic and environmental influences. Researchers generally classify the causes into individual factors, family-related factors and mental health factors. In most cases, a juvenile is exposed to several of these risk factors simultaneously, which increases the likelihood of delinquent behaviour.²¹

A child who lacks emotional support, discipline, education and moral guidance often becomes vulnerable to antisocial conduct. External pressures such as poverty, unemployment, broken families, unhealthy peer groups and media influence further intensify the problem. Juvenile offenders usually display a pattern of behaviour shaped by repeated exposure to such negative influences.²²

I. Individual Factors

Individual factors play a crucial role in shaping a child's behaviour and personality. Certain personal traits and characteristics significantly increase the risk of juvenile delinquency. A child with a low intelligence quotient (IQ), poor academic performance and lack of education is more susceptible to delinquent behaviour. Educational failure creates frustration, inferiority and low self-esteem, which often push children toward deviant activities. Moreover, other individual risk factors include impulsiveness, aggression, emotional instability, inability to control anger, lack of self-discipline and poor problem-solving skills. Children who struggle with delayed gratification and show a tendency toward risk-taking behaviour are more likely to become involved in criminal activities. Whereas, in many cases, juveniles exhibit substance

²⁰ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; POCSO Amendment Act, 2019.

²¹ P Haveripet, 'Causes and Consequences of Juvenile Delinquency in India' (2013) *Recent Research in Science and Technology*.

²² E H Johnson, *Crime, Correction and Society* (Dorsey Press, 1978).

abuse habits, including alcohol consumption, smoking and drug use at an early age. Substance dependency weakens self-control, distorts judgment and increases involvement in criminal acts such as theft, violence and sexual offences. When such destructive individual traits are left unaddressed, they gradually develop into habitual delinquency.²³

II. Family Factors

The family is the primary social institution responsible for shaping a child's moral, emotional and behavioural development. A dysfunctional family environment is one of the strongest contributing factors to juvenile delinquency. Several family-related risk factors have been identified by sociologists and criminologists. These include:

- Lack of proper parental supervision
- Domestic violence and frequent parental conflict
- Divorce and family disintegration
- Physical, emotional and sexual abuse
- Neglect and emotional deprivation
- Criminal behaviour of parents or siblings

Children raised in homes where parents show disrespect for law and social values are more likely to internalize similar attitudes. Lack of affection, discipline and communication between parents and children weakens emotional bonds and increases the child's vulnerability to peer pressure and criminal influence. To this extend, research shows that juveniles who share weak emotional attachment with their parents display higher levels of antisocial behaviour. Absence of guidance, love and moral training leaves a child directionless, making delinquency appear as a means of survival and identity formation.²⁴

III. Mental Health and Psychological Factors

Mental health significantly influences the development of juvenile delinquency, as many young

²³ P Yadav, 'Juvenile Delinquency as a Behavioural Problem' (2016) *International Journal of Indian Psychology*.

²⁴ E H Johnson, *Crime, Correction and Society* (Dorsey Press, 1978).

offenders experience emotional and psychological difficulties such as behavioural disorders, depression, anxiety, trauma, and disturbances in personality development. Even though formal diagnosis of serious personality disorders is generally discouraged during childhood, early warning signs frequently emerge in the form of aggressive, oppositional, or antisocial behaviour. Among the psychological conditions commonly observed in juvenile offenders, conduct disorder is particularly notable, as it is marked by a persistent pattern of violating social norms, reduced empathy, aggression, deceitfulness, and a sustained disregard for rules and authority. In accordance with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM IV, conduct disorder reflects repeated behavioural patterns that breach the rights of others and accepted social norms.²⁵

Juveniles who experience childhood trauma, sexual abuse, neglect or severe emotional shock often develop psychological imbalances that manifest later as violent or criminal behaviour. Mental illness, when combined with substance abuse and social rejection, significantly increases the probability of delinquent conduct. Without timely psychological counselling and medical intervention, such juveniles often become repeated offenders. Therefore, untreated mental health problems are not only personal health concerns but also serious social threats that fuel the cycle of juvenile crime.²⁶

4.1 Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency

Prevention of juvenile delinquency is of paramount importance because once a child repeatedly engages in criminal behaviour, rehabilitation becomes more difficult. Preventive measures must focus on early identification of vulnerable children and timely intervention. If juvenile misbehaviour is not controlled at an early stage, the child may become a habitual offender. Research shows that early intervention with children and their families is the most effective method of preventing delinquency.²⁷

Various state and central government schemes, social welfare programs and non-governmental organisations are now actively involved in delinquency prevention. Modern criminologists emphasise that delinquency prevention is not merely about punishment but about shaping a positive social environment. Preventive measures include family counselling, moral education,

²⁵ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th edn, 2004). Pp 85-93

²⁶ P Yadav, 'Juvenile Delinquency as a Behavioural Problem' (2016) *International Journal of Indian Psychology*.

²⁷ E H Johnson, *Crime, Correction and Society* (Dorsey Press, 1978).

school involvement, vocational training, psychological guidance, substance abuse treatment, youth mentoring and community development programmes.²⁸ Further delinquency prevention refers to all efforts aimed at stopping young people from becoming involved in criminal, violent or antisocial behaviour. Governments across the world are increasingly realising that prevention is more cost-effective and socially beneficial than dealing with crime after it occurs.

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs

Broadly, delinquency prevention programmes are divided into two major categories:

- I. Individual-based programmes
- II. Environmental-based programmes

These two approaches together form a balanced strategy for controlling juvenile delinquency.

1. Individual-Based Programs

(a) Clinical Program

Clinical programmes focus on the psychological assessment and treatment of juvenile offenders. These programmes aim to help juveniles understand their personality defects and behavioural problems through psychiatric care, psychological counselling and social therapy. Such clinics are operated by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and psychiatric social workers.

According to Taft & England, the major objectives of clinical programmes include:

- Identification of potential juvenile delinquents
- Diagnosis of behavioural disorders
- In-house treatment or referral for specialised care
- Creating awareness about psychological treatment methods
- Highlighting unmet emotional needs of children

²⁸ P Haveripet, 'Causes and Consequences of Juvenile Delinquency in India' (2013) *Recent Research in Science and Technology*.

- Training students in child psychology and behavioural science

These programmes are extremely valuable in correcting emotional disturbance, trauma and aggression among young offenders.²⁹

(b) Educational Programs

Educational institutions play a vital role in preventing juvenile delinquency because schools deeply influence a child's moral and social development. Teachers must treat students equally and avoid discrimination. Moral education should be an essential component of school curriculum, as it helps children understand the difference between right and wrong. Moreover, schools also help children develop discipline, social responsibility, cooperation and emotional stability. Education reduces unemployment, poverty and frustration, which are key contributors to juvenile crime. Therefore, a strong educational system is one of the most powerful tools against juvenile delinquency.³⁰

(c) Mental Hygiene Programs

Mental hygiene refers to the promotion of mental health and emotional stability, and it is strongly linked to the prevention of delinquency through the avoidance of emotional conflict and the early identification and treatment of psychological disorders during childhood. Children should be supported to form positive life goals and develop healthy, realistic ambitions, as such direction enhances self-control and reduces vulnerability to antisocial influence. In the foundation of the Indian Council for Mental Hygiene in 1944, Dr. K. R. Masani emphasised that mental hygiene has a vital role across education, medicine, law, industry, and social welfare, particularly in preventing crime and antisocial behaviour. Accordingly, children who develop emotional strength, self-discipline, and positive values are far less likely to engage in delinquent activities³¹. In addition, parental education programmes should be organised to enable families to create emotionally secure homes and sustain healthy parent child relationships, which in turn strengthens a child's psychological resilience and moral development.

²⁹ Taft & England, *Criminology* (Macmillan 1964).

³⁰ P Yadav, 'Juvenile Delinquency as a Behavioural Problem' (2016) *International Journal of Indian Psychology*.

³¹ Indian Council for Mental Hygiene (Est. 1944) – Public Mental Health Address.

(d) Recreational Programs

Recreational programmes are highly effective in preventing delinquency by providing positive outlets for youthful energy. Participation in sports, music, dance, theatre, art, martial arts and group activities helps children develop discipline, confidence, teamwork and emotional control. Such programmes also allow young people to form healthy friendships and stay away from criminal influences. Community playgrounds, sports clubs, youth centres, drama groups and cultural associations help channel youthful aggression into constructive activities. In rural areas, open-air activity centres and playgrounds serve the same purpose. Youth organisations must actively take responsibility for organising such programs.³²

(e) Removal of Inferiority Complex

In some cases, an inferiority complex, fear, frustration, and emotional insecurity may compel a child to commit offences as a means of asserting superiority or regaining control over their perceived shortcomings, and therefore children must be guided toward developing self-confidence, optimism, and emotional resilience. At the same time, excessive criticism, humiliation, and harsh or disproportionate punishment can severely erode a child's self-esteem, intensify emotional instability, and make delinquent behaviour more likely. For this reason, children need consistent love, encouragement, praise, sympathy, and sustained emotional support from both parents and teachers, since such nurturing helps them overcome feelings of inadequacy and rebuild inner stability. When emotional security is established, it strengthens moral decision making and enhances a child's capacity to resist negative peer pressure, thereby reducing the risk of offences.³³

2. Environmental-Based Programs

(a) Community Programs

Community programmes focus on improving the social environment in which juveniles live. These programmes aim to involve local residents, social workers, voluntary groups and youth organisations in preventing delinquency.

³² E H Johnson, *Crime, Correction and Society* (Dorsey Press, 1978).

³³ P Yadav, 'Juvenile Delinquency as a Behavioural Problem' (2016) *International Journal of Indian Psychology*.

According to Marshal B. Clinard, the core principles of community-based prevention include:

- Active participation of local residents
- Recognition that poor social environments can be changed
- Belief that small community-level changes have long-term positive impact
- Community programmes empower neighbourhoods to take responsibility for crime control rather than depending entirely on law enforcement agencies.³⁴

(b) Publicity and Media Control

Mass media plays a decisive role in shaping youth behaviour, and therefore newspapers, television, radio, cinema, and social media bear an essential responsibility to report juvenile crimes in a responsible and ethical manner. When media content indulges in sensationalism, glorifies offenders, or presents graphic portrayals of violence, it can adversely affect young and impressionable minds by distorting perceptions and normalizing harmful conduct. In contrast, media should primarily educate the public about the real underlying causes and far-reaching consequences of juvenile delinquency while highlighting positive youth role models and constructive pathways for reform. Through accurate, balanced, and context sensitive reporting, media can strengthen public awareness, cultivate social responsibility, and support broader efforts to prevent delinquency.³⁵

(c) Parental Love and Affection

A child fundamentally requires unconditional love, emotional security, care, and protection from parents, and the absence of genuine affection often results in emotional frustration and psychological insecurity that may gradually intensify into aggressive and criminal tendencies. In this context, parental warmth, trust, consistent supervision, and constructive guidance emerge as the most decisive influences in shaping a child's moral development and behavioural choices. Children who grow in emotionally secure and supportive families typically develop stronger self-control and moral resilience, which enables them to resist delinquent impulses

³⁴ Marshal B Clinard, *Sociology of Deviant Behaviour* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1963).

³⁵ P Haveripet, 'Causes and Consequences of Juvenile Delinquency in India' (2013) Recent Research in Science and Technology.

and maintain lawful, socially acceptable conduct.³⁶

(d) Family Environment

Family environment directly influences juvenile behaviour. The degree of supervision, discipline, conflict between parents, separation, criminal behaviour of family members and emotional bonding between parents and children significantly affect a child's behaviour.

Numerous studies show that lack of parental supervision is the strongest predictor of juvenile crime. A peaceful family atmosphere with guidance, trust, communication and moral training creates strong resistance against delinquency.³⁷

Conclusion

Juvenile delinquency, while difficult to eradicate completely, can be substantially controlled through a proactive welfare-oriented approach that addresses its underlying causes rather than merely imposing punishment. Across societies, exploitative and abusive experiences, including physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse, often leave lasting psychological scars, and when compounded by factors such as poor family environment, negative social influence, mental illness, substance abuse, and childhood trauma, they can gradually shape criminal tendencies in children. Over time, low self-control, emotional insecurity, and social rejection further erode self-esteem and encourage antisocial behaviour. Therefore, the core objective of juvenile justice must be reformation, rehabilitation, and social reintegration, with the State safeguarding children rights and implementing early prevention, family support, education, psychological care, and community involvement to foster confidence, self-discipline, and moral values. Only through a balanced combination of law, education, family care, and social responsibility can juveniles be effectively redirected and transformed into responsible citizens.

³⁶ E H Johnson, *Crime, Correction and Society* (Dorsey Press, 1978).

³⁷ Marshal B Clinard, *Sociology of Deviant Behaviour* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1963).