



Juvenile delinquency: causes and prevention, a socio-legal study (with special reference to the J.J. Act)

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ABSTRACT:

Juvenile delinquency is a growing socio-legal concern that affects the social order and future development of society. It refers to unlawful or antisocial behaviour committed by children below the age prescribed by law. The increasing involvement of juveniles in offences such as theft, violence, substance abuse, and cybercrime highlights the need for effective legal and social intervention. This research paper examines the major causes of juvenile delinquency, including poverty, broken families, peer pressure, lack of education, psychological imbalance, and negative social environment. The study further analyses the role of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 in addressing juvenile crime through a reformatory and rehabilitative approach. It also evaluates the effectiveness of institutions such as Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in ensuring the care, protection, and reintegration of children in conflict with law. The paper emphasizes that prevention of juvenile delinquency requires coordinated efforts by family, educational institutions, society, and the legal system. The study concludes that a balanced approach combining legal accountability



with rehabilitation and social support is essential for reducing juvenile delinquency and protecting the rights and future of children.

KEYWORDS: Juvenile Delinquency, Juvenile Justice Act, Child Rights, Rehabilitation, Juvenile Justice Board.

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INTRODUCTION:

Children constitute an essential part of every society and play a significant role in the development of a nation. Their physical, mental, and moral growth determines the future social and economic progress of the country. However, when children become involved in unlawful or antisocial activities, it creates serious challenges for both society and the legal system. Juvenile delinquency has therefore emerged as an important socio-legal issue requiring immediate attention and effective intervention. Juvenile delinquency generally refers to criminal or deviant behaviour committed by a child below the age prescribed by law. In India, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 defines a child as a person below eighteen years of age.¹ Delinquent acts committed by juveniles may include theft, assault, vandalism, drug abuse, cybercrime, and other offences prohibited under law. Unlike adult offenders, juveniles are considered emotionally immature and more vulnerable to social and environmental influences. Consequently, modern juvenile justice systems focus more on rehabilitation and reformation rather than punishment. The problem of juvenile delinquency has increased due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, poverty, family disintegration, unemployment, substance abuse, peer pressure, and exposure to violent media content.² Children living in unstable social and economic conditions often become victims of neglect, exploitation, and criminal influence. Lack of education, parental supervision, and emotional support further contribute to delinquent behaviour among adolescents. The Indian

¹ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, § 2(12), India Code (2015).

² N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology* 245–247 (Central Law Publications, 18th ed. 2021).



legal system has adopted a welfare-oriented and child-friendly approach toward juveniles. Earlier laws relating to juvenile offenders mainly emphasized custody and correction; however, with the development of international human rights standards, greater importance has been given to child protection and rehabilitation. India became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, which recognizes the rights and dignity of children and promotes reformative treatment for juveniles.³ In order to comply with international obligations and strengthen the juvenile justice system, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 was enacted. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 provides a comprehensive legal framework for children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection. The Act establishes Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees for ensuring proper care, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of children.⁴ At the same time, the Act introduced provisions for trying juveniles aged between sixteen and eighteen years as adults in cases involving heinous offences, subject to preliminary assessment by the Juvenile Justice Board.⁵ This provision has generated significant legal and ethical debate regarding the balance between child rights and societal interests. Juvenile delinquency cannot be addressed solely through legal measures. Effective prevention requires the combined efforts of family, educational institutions, society, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Counselling, education, vocational training, mental health support, and community participation are essential for preventing children from engaging in criminal activities and helping them reintegrate into society. The present study aims to analyse the causes of juvenile delinquency and examine the role of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 in addressing this issue. The study also highlights preventive and rehabilitative measures necessary for reducing juvenile crime and protecting the future of children.

MEANING AND CONCEPT OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY:

³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.

⁴ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, §§ 4 & 27, India Code (2015).



Juvenile delinquency refers to unlawful, antisocial, or deviant behaviour committed by a child or adolescent who is below the age prescribed by law. The term “juvenile” means a minor or a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years, while “delinquency” refers to behaviour that violates legal or social norms. Thus, juvenile delinquency includes those acts committed by children which, if committed by adults, would amount to criminal offences.⁵

Juvenile delinquency is not only a legal issue but also a social and psychological problem. Children involved in delinquent activities are often influenced by social circumstances such as poverty, broken families, peer pressure, lack of education, neglect, and exposure to violence. Unlike adult criminals, juveniles are considered less mature emotionally and mentally, and therefore the law treats them differently by focusing more on reform and rehabilitation rather than punishment.⁶

From a sociological perspective, juvenile delinquency refers to behaviour that departs from accepted social standards and values. Such behaviour may include theft, assault, truancy, vandalism, drug abuse, cybercrime, and gang-related activities. Sociologists believe that delinquent behaviour develops due to the failure of social institutions such as family, school, and community in properly guiding children.⁷

Legally, juvenile delinquency is governed in India by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age and provides special procedures for dealing with children in conflict with law.⁸ The objective of the law is not merely to punish juveniles but to provide care, protection, treatment, counselling, education, and rehabilitation so that they can become responsible members of society.

⁵ N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology* 243 (Central Law Publications, 18th ed. 2021).

⁶ Ahmed Siddique, *Criminology: Problems and Perspectives* 198–200 (Eastern Book Company, 5th ed. 2018).

⁷ Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* 142–145 (Lippincott Company, 7th ed. 1966).

⁸ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, § 2(12), India Code (2015).



The concept of juvenile delinquency has evolved significantly over time. Earlier legal systems treated juveniles similarly to adult offenders, emphasizing punishment and detention. However, modern approaches recognize that children are capable of reform and deserve opportunities for reintegration into society. International instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989 emphasize the protection of child rights and encourage reformative measures in juvenile justice administration.⁹

Therefore, juvenile delinquency can be understood as a multidimensional issue arising from social, economic, psychological, and environmental factors, requiring a balanced approach involving legal protection, social support, and rehabilitation.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE IN INDIA:

The juvenile justice system in India has evolved gradually from a punitive approach to a reformative and child-centric framework. Earlier, juvenile offenders were treated in the same manner as adult criminals, and little importance was given to their age, psychological condition, or rehabilitation. Over time, social reform movements, international developments, and changing attitudes toward child rights contributed to the establishment of a separate justice system for juveniles.¹⁰

The first significant legislation concerning juveniles in India was the Apprentices Act, 1850. The Act aimed at providing vocational training to neglected and orphaned children between the ages of ten and eighteen years.¹¹ It reflected the early recognition that children involved in unlawful activities required care and training rather than harsh punishment. Subsequently, the Reformatory Schools Act, 1897 was enacted to establish reformatory schools for young

⁹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.

¹⁰ N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology* 256–258 (Central Law Publications, 18th ed. 2021).

¹¹ The Apprentices Act, 1850, No. 19 of 1850.



offenders.¹² Under this law, juvenile offenders could be detained in reformatory institutions instead of prisons. The objective was to reform children through education, discipline, and vocational training. During the early twentieth century, several provinces enacted separate children laws. The Madras Children Act, 1920, the Bengal Children Act, 1922, and the Bombay Children Act, 1924 introduced special procedures and institutions for dealing with juvenile offenders.¹³ These laws recognized the need for separate treatment of children and laid the foundation for juvenile courts and child welfare institutions in India. After independence, the Government of India enacted the Children Act, 1960 to provide a uniform framework for the care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training, and rehabilitation of neglected and delinquent children in Union Territories. However, the law was not uniformly applicable across all states.¹⁴ In order to establish a nationwide juvenile justice system, Parliament enacted the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986.¹⁵ This legislation was enacted in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, 1985, also known as the Beijing Rules. The Act provided a uniform legal framework throughout the country and emphasized care, protection, treatment, development, and rehabilitation of juveniles. A major development occurred when India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989.¹⁶ To bring Indian law in conformity with international standards, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 was enacted. The Act adopted a child-friendly approach and recognized all persons below eighteen years as juveniles. It also introduced provisions relating to adoption, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of children. The increasing incidence of serious crimes committed by juveniles, particularly after the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, led to public demand for stricter laws. Consequently, the

¹² The Reformatory Schools Act, 1897, No. 8 of 1897.

¹³ Ahmed Siddique, *Criminology: Problems and Perspectives* 214–216 (Eastern Book Company, 5th ed. 2018).

¹⁴ The Children Act, 1960, No. 60 of 1960.

¹⁵ The Juvenile Justice Act, 1986, No. 53 of 1986.

¹⁶ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.



Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 replaced the 2000 Act. The new law retained the reformatory approach but introduced provisions allowing children between sixteen and eighteen years accused of heinous offences to be tried as adults after preliminary assessment by the Juvenile Justice Board. Today, the juvenile justice system in India seeks to balance child rights with societal interests. The present legal framework emphasizes rehabilitation, counselling, education, and reintegration while also addressing concerns relating to serious juvenile offences.

CAUSES OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY:

Juvenile delinquency is caused by a combination of social, economic, psychological, and environmental factors that negatively influence the behaviour of children and adolescents. One of the primary causes is family disorganization, including broken homes, domestic violence, parental neglect, lack of supervision, and poor emotional support. Children growing up in unstable family environments often experience insecurity and frustration, which may lead them toward antisocial activities. Poverty and unemployment also play a significant role in increasing juvenile crime, as economically deprived children may engage in theft, drug trafficking, begging, or other unlawful acts to satisfy their basic needs.¹⁷ Another important factor contributing to juvenile delinquency is lack of education and school dropout. Educational institutions play a vital role in developing discipline, morality, and social responsibility among children. When children remain outside the educational system, they become more vulnerable to criminal influence and exploitation. Peer pressure is also a major cause, especially during adolescence when children are easily influenced by friends and social groups. Association with delinquent peers may encourage behaviours such as substance abuse, violence, cybercrime, and gang activities.¹⁸ Psychological and emotional factors further contribute to delinquent

¹⁷ N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology* 260–263 (Central Law Publications, 18th ed. 2021).

¹⁸ Ahmed Siddique, *Criminology: Problems and Perspectives* 220–224 (Eastern Book Company, 5th ed. 2018).



behaviour. Mental stress, trauma, depression, inferiority complex, and lack of emotional stability may push children toward aggression and criminal conduct. In many cases, juveniles who are victims of physical or emotional abuse develop violent tendencies. Additionally, rapid urbanization, exposure to violent media content, and unrestricted access to the internet have increased the risk of juvenile involvement in cybercrime and other unlawful activities.¹⁹Therefore, juvenile delinquency cannot be attributed to a single reason; rather, it is the result of multiple interconnected social and personal factors that influence a child's behaviour and development.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN INDIA:

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, juvenile delinquency in India has shown a gradual increase in recent years. In 2023, a total of 31,365 cases were registered against juveniles in conflict with law as compared to 30,555 cases in 2022.²⁰ The majority of juveniles involved in criminal activities belonged to the age group of sixteen to eighteen years, which constituted nearly 79% of the total juveniles apprehended during the year. The data further reveals that offences such as theft, assault, burglary, kidnapping, and offences under special laws formed a major portion of juvenile crimes. Rapid urbanization, poverty, peer pressure, family disorganization, substance abuse, and increasing exposure to cyber activities are considered some of the important reasons behind the rise in juvenile offences.²¹ The NCRB report also recorded an increase in crimes against children. In 2023, a total of 1,77,335 cases of crimes against children were registered, showing a rise of 9.2% compared to 2022.²² Kidnapping

¹⁹ Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* 148–152 (Lippincott Company, 7th ed. 1966).

²⁰ National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India Report 2023*.

²¹ N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology* 260–263 (Central Law Publications, 18th ed. 2021).

²² “Crime against Children Records 9.2 Per Cent Rise in 2023: NCRB,” *Hindustan Times* (Sept. 30, 2025).



and offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act constituted a significant portion of these crimes.

These statistics indicate that juvenile delinquency has become an important socio-legal issue in India. The increasing involvement of adolescents in unlawful activities highlights the need for effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 along with stronger rehabilitation, counselling, educational support, and social awareness programs.

JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015:

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is the primary legislation governing juveniles in India. The Act was enacted with the objective of ensuring proper care, protection, development, treatment, and rehabilitation of children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection. It replaced the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 and was enacted in accordance with constitutional principles and international standards relating to child rights, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).²³ The legislation adopts a child-friendly and reformatory approach while balancing the interests of society and the rights of children. Under the Act, a child is defined as a person who has not completed eighteen years of age.²⁴ The law broadly classifies children into two categories: children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.²⁵ A child in conflict with law refers to a juvenile alleged or found to have committed an offence, whereas children who are abandoned, abused, orphaned, neglected, or vulnerable fall within the category of children in need of care and protection. The Act establishes Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) for dealing with cases involving juveniles accused of offences and Child Welfare

²³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.

²⁴ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, s.2(12), India Code (2015).

²⁵ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015) s.2(13) & 2(14).



Committees (CWCs) for matters relating to the care and protection of vulnerable children.²⁶ These institutions are expected to function in a child-friendly manner and ensure that children are treated with dignity, sensitivity, and compassion during legal proceedings. One of the important features of the Act is the classification of offences into petty offences, serious offences, and heinous offences.²⁷ The Act introduced a significant provision allowing juveniles between sixteen and eighteen years of age accused of heinous offences to be tried as adults after a preliminary assessment by the Juvenile Justice Board regarding their mental and physical capacity to commit such offence and their understanding of its consequences.²⁸ This provision was introduced after widespread public concern following the 2012 Delhi gang rape incident and has remained a subject of legal and ethical debate. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 strongly emphasizes rehabilitation and social reintegration of juveniles. It provides for observation homes, special homes, counselling, foster care, adoption, vocational training, and after-care programs aimed at reforming children and helping them become responsible members of society.²⁹ The Act also prohibits cruelty against children, child trafficking, child labour exploitation, and illegal adoption practices, thereby strengthening child protection mechanisms in India. The legislation reflects the modern principle that children who come into conflict with law should not be treated as hardened criminals but should instead be provided opportunities for reform and rehabilitation. Therefore, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 represents an important step toward establishing a humane, reformatory, and rights-based juvenile justice system in India.

Critical Analysis of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

²⁶ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015) s.4 & 27

²⁷ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015) 2(33), 2(45), & 2(54).

²⁸ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015) s.15-18

²⁹ N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology* 270–275 (Central Law Publications, 18th ed. 2021).



The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is regarded as a significant development in the Indian juvenile justice system because it combines the principles of child protection, rehabilitation, and accountability. The Act aims to provide a child-friendly approach in dealing with children in conflict with law while ensuring their proper care, protection, development, and reintegration into society.³⁰ It reflects India's commitment toward international standards relating to child rights, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).³¹ However, despite its progressive features, the Act has been criticized on several legal, social, and practical grounds. One of the most debated provisions of the Act is the power to try juveniles between sixteen and eighteen years of age as adults for heinous offences after a preliminary assessment by the Juvenile Justice Board.³² Supporters of this provision argue that increasing involvement of older juveniles in serious crimes requires stricter legal accountability to protect society and deter criminal behaviour. The provision was largely influenced by public outrage following the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, where one of the accused was a juvenile.³³ However, critics argue that such a provision undermines the reformative philosophy of juvenile justice by exposing children to the harshness of the adult criminal justice system. Psychological studies suggest that adolescents lack full mental maturity and decision-making capacity, making it inappropriate to treat them as adults. Another criticism relates to the implementation of the Act. Although the legislation provides for Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, observation homes, and rehabilitation mechanisms, the actual functioning of these institutions remains inadequate in many parts of India. Many observation homes suffer from poor living conditions, overcrowding, lack of trained staff, and insufficient counselling facilities. In several cases, children housed in such institutions experience neglect, abuse, and psychological trauma rather than rehabilitation. The Act also

³⁰ The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, Preamble, India Code (2015).

³¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.

³² The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, s. 15–18, India Code (2015).

³³ Mukesh & Anr. v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2017) 6 SCC 1.



faces challenges regarding delays in inquiry and disposal of cases. Lack of infrastructure, shortage of specialized personnel, and inadequate coordination among authorities often hinder the effective implementation of juvenile justice measures. Furthermore, many juveniles released from institutions face social stigma and discrimination, making reintegration into society difficult.³⁴ Without proper educational opportunities, vocational training, and community support, rehabilitated juveniles may again become involved in criminal activities. Despite these shortcomings, the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 has several positive aspects. It recognizes the importance of child rights, rehabilitation, foster care, adoption, counselling, and social reintegration. The Act adopts child-friendly procedures and prohibits cruelty, exploitation, trafficking, and abuse of children.⁸ It also strengthens adoption laws and provides legal protection to children in need of care and protection. Therefore, while the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 represents an important step toward a modern and reformatory juvenile justice system, its success largely depends upon effective implementation, proper infrastructure, trained professionals, and social awareness. The law must maintain a balance between protecting society and safeguarding the rights and future of children.

PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY:

Juvenile delinquency can be prevented only when proper attention is given to the social and emotional development of children. Children generally do not become offenders by choice; many times their behaviour is influenced by family problems, poverty, lack of education, bad company, and social environment. Therefore, instead of only punishing juveniles, greater importance should be given to guidance, care, and rehabilitation. Family is the first institution that shapes the behaviour of a child. A peaceful and supportive family environment helps children develop good values and discipline. On the other hand, domestic violence, neglect,

³⁴ Ashish Lakra, Juvenile Justice in India: A Critical Legal Analysis of Delinquency, Reform, and Accountability, 3 ShodhKosh 88, 94–96 (2024).



lack of parental supervision, and broken families may push children towards criminal activities. Parents should therefore spend time with their children, understand their problems, and provide emotional support whenever needed. Education also plays an important role in preventing juvenile delinquency. Schools help children learn discipline, moral values, and social responsibility. Children who remain away from education are more likely to come into contact with negative influences. Schools should organize counselling sessions, awareness programs, and extracurricular activities so that children remain positively engaged and mentally healthy. Another important step is improving the economic and social conditions of children. Poverty, unemployment, and child labour often force children into unlawful activities. The government should provide better educational facilities, vocational training, and welfare schemes for poor and vulnerable children. NGOs and social organizations can also help by spreading awareness and supporting rehabilitation programs. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 also focuses on rehabilitation and social reintegration rather than strict punishment. The Act provides for counselling, observation homes, foster care, education, and vocational training for juveniles so that they can reform and become responsible citizens. Proper implementation of these measures is necessary for reducing juvenile crime in society. Thus, prevention of juvenile delinquency requires joint efforts from parents, schools, society, and the legal system. Children need guidance, support, education, and opportunities for development so that they do not move towards delinquent behaviour and can contribute positively to society.

LANDMARK CASES RELATED TO JUVENILE JUSTICE:

1. Sheela Barse v. Union of India (1986)

In this case, the Supreme Court focused on the protection of children lodged in jails and observation homes. The Court observed that juveniles should not be kept together with adult offenders because it could negatively affect their mental and physical development. The Court emphasized the need for separate institutions, proper legal aid, counselling, and speedy



investigation in cases involving juveniles. This judgment played an important role in strengthening the juvenile justice system in India and highlighted the importance of treating children with care and dignity.³⁵

2. Pratap Singh v. State of Jharkhand (2005)

This case dealt with the issue of determination of age in juvenile cases. The Supreme Court held that the age of the accused on the date of commission of the offence would determine whether the person is a juvenile or not. The judgment clarified important provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and reinforced the reformative approach adopted for children in conflict with law.³⁶

3. Hari Ram v. State of Rajasthan (2009)

In this case, the Supreme Court held that the Juvenile Justice Act should be interpreted in a beneficial manner in favour of children. The Court further clarified that all persons below eighteen years of age would be treated as juveniles under the Juvenile Justice Act, even if the offence was committed before the amendment raising the age limit. The judgment strengthened the child-friendly approach of juvenile justice law in India.³⁷

4. Mukesh & Anr. v. State (NCT of Delhi) (2017)

This case arose from the 2012 Delhi gang rape incident, where one of the accused was a juvenile. Although the juvenile was tried separately under the juvenile justice system, the case created nationwide debate regarding the adequacy of existing juvenile laws for dealing with heinous offences committed by older adolescents. Public reaction to this case led to the enactment of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which allows

³⁵ Sheela Barse v. Union of India, AIR 1986 SC 1773.

³⁶ Pratap Singh v. State of Jharkhand, (2005) 3 SCC 551.

³⁷ Hari Ram v. State of Rajasthan, (2009) 13 SCC 211.



juveniles aged between sixteen and eighteen years accused of heinous offences to be tried as adults after assessment by the Juvenile Justice Board.³⁸

These landmark judgments significantly contributed to the development of juvenile justice jurisprudence in India by emphasizing child rights, rehabilitation, and the reformatory approach of the legal system.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In my opinion, juvenile delinquency can be reduced only when society focuses more on the proper development and guidance of children rather than only punishing them. Many children become involved in criminal activities because of family problems, poverty, lack of education, bad company, and emotional stress. Therefore, preventive and rehabilitative measures should be given more importance. Firstly, parents should maintain a healthy and supportive environment at home. Children need proper attention, emotional support, and guidance during their growing years. Lack of parental care and supervision often leads children towards negative influences and antisocial behaviour. Secondly, educational institutions should play a more active role in shaping the personality of students. Schools should organize counselling sessions, awareness programs, and extracurricular activities to help children remain mentally and socially engaged. Moral education and mental health support should also be encouraged at the school level. Another important suggestion is that the government should improve the condition of observation homes and rehabilitation centres established under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. Proper counselling facilities, vocational training, and educational opportunities should be provided to juveniles so that they can reform themselves and become responsible citizens. Further, society should avoid stigmatizing juveniles who have committed offences. Instead of treating them as criminals for life, they should be given opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society. NGOs and social organizations can also contribute

³⁸ Mukesh & Anr. v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2017) 6 SCC 1.



by spreading awareness and supporting child welfare programs. Lastly, effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is necessary. Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees should function properly and ensure speedy justice, rehabilitation, and protection of children's rights.

Therefore, collective efforts by parents, schools, society, and the legal system are essential for preventing juvenile delinquency and securing a better future for children.

CONCLUSION

Juvenile delinquency has emerged as a significant socio-legal concern in contemporary society. The increasing involvement of juveniles in criminal activities is influenced by various social, economic, psychological, and environmental factors, including poverty, family disorganization, lack of education, peer influence, and emotional instability. These factors indicate that juvenile delinquency is not merely a legal issue but also a reflection of broader social challenges. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 represents a reformatory and child-centric approach by emphasizing rehabilitation, care, protection, and social reintegration of juveniles. While the Act provides an effective legal framework for addressing juvenile offences, its successful implementation depends upon proper institutional support, counselling facilities, educational opportunities, and community participation. Therefore, prevention of juvenile delinquency requires coordinated efforts from family, educational institutions, society, and the legal system. A balanced approach based on rehabilitation, guidance, and social awareness can play a crucial role in reducing juvenile delinquency and ensuring the welfare and future development of children in India.



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