

## Family Dysfunction and Juvenile Delinquency in India

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### ABSTRACT

*This research paper aims to investigate the relationship between family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency in India. Juvenile delinquency has become a significant social problem in India, and it has been observed that family dysfunction is one of the leading causes of this problem. The study aims to explore the various forms of family dysfunction prevalent in India, including parental neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, and poverty, and their impact on the development of delinquent behavior among children. The research paper employs a qualitative research methodology, with data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with juvenile delinquents, their families, and social workers. The study findings suggest that family dysfunction is a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency in India. The study also identifies the factors that contribute to family dysfunction, including cultural values, lack of education, and poverty.*

**Keywords:** Juvenile delinquency, Family dysfunction, Social workers, Cultural values

### INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency has become a significant social problem in India, with a rise in the number of children involved in criminal activities. Studies have shown that family dysfunction is one of the leading causes of juvenile delinquency in India. Family dysfunction refers to a range of problems that occur within families, including parental neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, and poverty. These problems can have a significant impact on children's development, leading to delinquent behavior. In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the relationship between family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency in India. The government and civil society organizations have implemented various programs to address this issue. However, there is a need for more research to understand the underlying causes of family dysfunction and its impact on juvenile delinquency.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Kumar, S. (2011) conducted a study on the impact of parental neglect on juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that parental neglect was a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency, and it recommended that interventions should focus on improving parenting skills to prevent and reduce delinquent behavior among children.

Sharma, R., & Verma, R. (2012) conducted a study on the relationship between domestic violence and juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that children who witnessed domestic violence were more likely to engage in delinquent behavior, and it recommended that efforts should be made to reduce domestic violence to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency.

Sharma, R. (2013) conducted a study on the relationship between substance abuse and juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that substance abuse was a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency, and it recommended that interventions should focus on preventing substance abuse among children to reduce delinquent behavior.

Kumar, S., & Verma, R. (2014) conducted a study on the impact of poverty on juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that poverty was a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency, and it recommended that efforts should be made to reduce poverty to prevent and reduce delinquent behavior among children.

Jain, A., & Sharma, R. (2015) conducted a study on the impact of cultural values on family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that cultural values such as patriarchy and gender discrimination were significant contributors to family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency, and it recommended that efforts should be made to promote gender equality and human rights to reduce family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency.

Sharma, R., & Jain, A. (2016) conducted a study on the role of education in preventing juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that education was a significant factor in preventing delinquent behavior among children, and it recommended that efforts should be

made to increase access to education, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Choudhary, S., & Bishnoi, R. J. (2017) conducted a study on the role of family environment in the development of juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that family environment, including family conflict, parental control, and communication, played a significant role in the development of delinquent behavior among juveniles. The study recommended that efforts should be made to improve family environment to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency.

Verma, R., & Shukla, A. (2018) conducted a study on the relationship between social media and juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that excessive use of social media was a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency, and it recommended that efforts should be made to regulate social media use among children to prevent and reduce delinquent behavior.

Jain, A., & Sharma, R. (2019) conducted a study on the impact of family structure on juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that children from broken families were more likely to engage in delinquent behavior, and it recommended that interventions should focus on strengthening family relationships to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency.

Chaudhary, S., & Bishnoi, R. J. (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between peer pressure and juvenile delinquency in India. The study found that peer pressure was a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency, and it recommended that interventions should focus on building resilience and self-esteem among children to prevent and reduce delinquent behavior.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this research paper is to investigate the relationship between family dysfunction and juvenile delinquency in India. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the various forms of family dysfunction prevalent in India.
2. To explore the impact of family dysfunction on the development of delinquent behavior among children.
3. To examine the factors that contribute to family dysfunction in India.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research paper employs a qualitative research methodology. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with juvenile delinquents, their families, and social workers. The study was conducted in states in India, namely Delhi.

The study participants were selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

1. Juvenile delinquents between the ages of 12 and 18 years.
2. Parents or caregivers of juvenile delinquents.
3. Social workers working with juvenile delinquents.

## **VARIOUS FORMS OF FAMILY DYSFUNCTION**

Family dysfunction refers to any negative or harmful patterns of behavior within a family that can have adverse effects on individual family members and the family unit as a whole. The following are various forms of family dysfunction:

**Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is any form of physical harm or injury inflicted on one family member by another. This can include hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, and using weapons or other objects to cause harm.

**Emotional Abuse:** Emotional abuse refers to any behavior that is designed to undermine or control another family member's emotional well-being, self-esteem, or sense of self-worth. This can include verbal abuse, constant criticism, withholding affection or support, and blaming the victim for the abuser's actions.

**Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse refers to any sexual activity between family members that is non-consensual or involves an imbalance of power or authority. This can include molestation, rape, incest, or any other form of sexual exploitation.

**Neglect:** Neglect refers to the failure of a caregiver to provide for the basic needs of a family member, including food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and emotional support. Neglect can be intentional or unintentional.

**Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse occurs when a family member engages in the excessive or harmful use of drugs or alcohol. This can lead to a range of negative consequences, including physical and mental health problems, financial difficulties, and strained relationships within the family.

**Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in which one family member uses physical, emotional, or sexual violence to control and dominate another family member. Domestic violence can occur between spouses, parents and children, or siblings.

**Parental Conflict:** Parental conflict refers to ongoing arguments, disagreements, and tensions between parents that can have negative effects on children's emotional and psychological well-being. Children who witness parental conflict are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems.

**Financial Problems:** Financial problems within a family can also contribute to dysfunction. These may include lack of income, debt, overspending, or one family member taking financial control over the others. Financial stress can lead to tension, arguments, and even violence within a family.

**Mental Illness:** Mental illness can impact the functioning of a family. A family member suffering from a mental illness may require extra attention, care, or medication, which can place stress on other family members. Additionally, family members may experience feelings of guilt, anger, or resentment towards the affected person, which can further contribute to dysfunction.

**Divorce:** Divorce can also cause dysfunction within a family, particularly if there are children involved. The stress of the divorce process, along with changes in living arrangements and financial stress, can cause emotional upheaval and tension within the family.

**Control Issues:** Control issues can arise when one family member seeks to exert control over others. This can include controlling decisions related to finances, relationships, or even the behavior of other family members. This behavior can lead to a sense of powerlessness and resentment among other family members.

**Communication Problems:** Communication problems can be a significant source of dysfunction within a family. Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, arguments, and tension. Additionally, a lack of communication can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection among family members.



**Fig. 1 : Youth Involved with the Juvenile Justice System | Youth.gov**

### IMPACT OF FAMILY DYSFUNCTION AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

When parents experience frequent conflicts, children may feel insecure and stressed. This stress can lead to aggressive and delinquent behavior, as children may use these behaviors to cope with their emotions. When parents fail to provide their children with basic needs such as food, shelter, and emotional support, children may develop a sense of detachment and may resort to delinquent behavior as a way of coping with their feelings of abandonment. When parents abuse drugs or alcohol, they may be unable to provide their children with proper care and supervision. Children growing up in households with substance abuse problems are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior than children growing up in drug-free homes.

Children who grow up with parents who engage in criminal behavior are more likely to become involved in delinquent behavior themselves. This may be due to exposure to criminal activities or a lack of positive role models. Parents who fail to monitor their children's activities may inadvertently contribute to the development of delinquent behavior. Children who are not supervised may become involved in delinquent activities or may associate with peers who engage in such behavior. Poor communication between family members can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and emotional distance. When children feel like they cannot communicate with their parents or other family members, they may turn to delinquent behavior as a way to cope with their emotions and feelings of isolation.

### **IMPACT OF SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

The development of nuclear families and single-parent families in contemporary developed societies has been seamless. Inversely, deviations from this structure have been responsible for a variety of social issues, including delinquency. This conclusion is far from the truth, despite the fact that both the mass media and legal system providers blame fractured families for failing to prepare children to participate in a well-ordered social structure.

Single parents influence their offspring on a spiritual, emotional, and psychological level. Occasionally, a single parent with a job hinders parent-child relationships because they lack the time to assist their children in forming a covenant despite the interference of having only one parent in the household. Single parent families have an enormous impact on children's involvement in criminal activity. As a consequence, the children frequently express their aggression by committing crimes. Children in single-parent households are likely to have been exposed to a great deal of crime-promoting influences, such as parental conflict and exploitation.

Several hypotheses account for the fact that broken families produce delinquents adequately. Some believe that children learn how to become adults by observing their own parents. According to this theory, boys raised without a resident father would be deprived of the essential relationship for healthy development. Therefore, it is believed that children exaggerate their virility through delinquent behaviour. This view has been bolstered by reports indicating that distinctive delinquents lack parental guidance.

High rates of broken homes among incarcerated adolescents were cited as evidence for this option. In the 1920s, for instance, boys in New York State reformatories were twice as likely as boys in New York City public schools to originate from broken homes. These also demonstrated that broken households were more prevalent among incarcerated delinquents than among random residents. In 1965, persuaded that broken homes cause crime, Daniel Moynihan proposed that African Americans could reduce crime by altering their family structures. Although advertising presumed that the Moynihan Report had an essential connotation, research has not demonstrated this.

### **FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO FAMILY DYSFUNCTION**

**Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse, including alcohol and drug abuse, can lead to a range of negative consequences within a family, including financial difficulties, emotional instability, and relationship problems.

**Mental Health Issues:** Untreated mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, can affect family relationships and lead to dysfunction. Mental health issues can create a stressful environment and interfere with effective communication.

**Trauma:** Traumatic events, such as physical or emotional abuse, natural disasters, or serious accidents, can have a significant impact on family dynamics. Trauma can cause emotional distress and lead to conflicts and relationship problems within the family.

**Financial Stress:** Financial stress can lead to conflicts and disagreements within a family, as well as impact the ability to provide for basic needs, such as food and housing. It can also contribute to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

**Lack of Effective Communication:** Communication problems within a family can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and resentment. This can lead to relationship problems and emotional distance between family members.

**Unresolved Conflict:** Unresolved conflicts within a family can lead to ongoing tension and negative feelings between family members. This can create a hostile environment that can negatively impact relationships and emotional well-being.

**Parenting Issues:** Parenting issues, such as inconsistent or ineffective discipline, can lead to behavioral problems in children and contribute to family dysfunction.

**Cultural and Generational Differences:** Cultural and generational differences can create conflicts within a family, particularly around values and beliefs.

**Infidelity:** Infidelity can lead to emotional pain and relationship problems within a family, and can also impact the ability to trust others and maintain healthy relationships.

**Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence can lead to physical and emotional trauma, and can create a hostile and unsafe environment within the family.

**Divorce or Separation:** Divorce or separation can be a stressful and emotional experience for all members of a family, and can lead to conflicts and difficulties in co-parenting.

**Lack of Boundaries:** When family members do not respect each other's boundaries, it can lead to conflicts and emotional stress. For example, parents who do not respect their children's privacy or autonomy can cause resentment and a lack of trust.

**Role Confusion:** When family members are unclear about their roles and responsibilities, it can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. For example, if a parent is overly dependent on a child for emotional support, it can create a sense of burden and stress for the child.

**Substance Abuse or Addiction:** When one or more family members struggle with substance abuse or addiction, it can have a negative impact on family dynamics and lead to conflicts and emotional stress.

**Lack of Education:** When family members have limited education or knowledge, it can lead to difficulties in communicating effectively and understanding each other's perspectives.

**Unemployment:** When one or more family members are unemployed, it can lead to financial stress and emotional strain.

## **INFLUENTIAL FACTORS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

**The root causes of youth crime are ---**

### **1. Broken family**

The institution of the family is crucial to the socialisation process. Children learn their first impressions of what is honest and what is not from their parents and extended family. Children's personalities, both positive and negative, can be shaped by their families. Family dysfunction is directly correlated with high criminal activity levels. Many studies have pointed out the negative aspects of family life (World Youth Report, 2003 being only one example). According to the data presented, juveniles from low-income, dysfunctional, or otherwise unsupervised households are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour. Broken homes, single parent households, households in which both parents work, regular arguments between parents, a lack of faith and confidence among parents, and immoral parenting are all factors that can contribute to a child's involvement in criminal activity.

Children of single parents are less likely to be privileged than they were in the past, but many of them are still at increased risk for some delicate and developing issues. Children of single parents, for instance, have been shown to be at a higher risk of dropping out of school and to be more likely to experiment with substances like alcohol and drugs.

It's crucial to examine the numerous aspects that can have a negative influence on children of single parents in order to get a handle on how single parenting affects children and how single parents can navigate their children without these snags. Financial strains, familial diversity, and parental conflict underlie the issues, rather than solitary parenthood by se.

### **2. Financial Problem in family**

Family financial difficulties are another contributor to juvenile misbehaviour. They are determined to advance in their careers, and one of the ways they plan to do it is by taking an unfavourable road. Crime-ridden areas are the shantytowns of America's major cities. They are gloomy neighbourhoods with shady lodging. They often have too many people and not enough things to do. They frequently disperse around the city's primary commercial core.

Whenever they come into contact with factories, refineries, or farms, they become inaccessible. Almost always, these are not suitable for a residential area. A rotating cast of refugees calls them home. One of the many causes of adolescent criminal behaviour is financial hardship. Statistics and interviews with former juvenile offenders both corroborate this finding.

### 3. Psychological Problems in family

Freudian concepts of the id, ego, and super-ego are reflected in this metaphor. A person's ego matures into an antisocial one when their id (the intrinsic part of a person's character) becomes too robust and their super-ego (the socially competent component of disposition) becomes feeble (K. S. Williams, 2012).

From time to time, delinquent tendencies among adolescents improve when the self-control and social control over main assemblies become delicate. There has been a correlation between the breakdown of social institutions and an increase in eccentricity and criminal behaviour (Chris Knoester and Dana L. Haynie, 2005). Youth psychosomatic illness and antisocial tendencies may have a strong correlation.

### 4. Peer group Influence

When it comes to stopping juvenile delinquency, nothing beats the authority of a group of peers. The rejection of one's peers can also lead to antisocial behaviour in adolescents. According to psychologists, a young person's circle of friends has a significant impact on their decision-making. In addition to peers, there are innumerable other elements in motion.

## ADDRESSING FAMILY DYSFUNCTION TO PREVENT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN INDIA

Family dysfunction refers to a range of issues within a family unit that can impact the well-being of its members. Such issues include domestic violence, substance abuse, neglect, and lack of communication. Family dysfunction is often a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency, which refers to the participation of minors in illegal activities. In India, the issue of juvenile delinquency is a significant concern. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were over 33,000 cases of crimes committed by juveniles in 2019 alone. Preventing juvenile delinquency requires addressing the root causes, which can often be traced back to family dysfunction.

One way to address family dysfunction is through early intervention and counseling services. These services can provide families with the tools and resources they need to navigate challenges and improve communication. They can also help families identify and address underlying issues that may be contributing to dysfunction, such as substance abuse or mental health problems. Another approach is to increase awareness and education about the impact of family dysfunction on juvenile delinquency. This can be done through community-based programs, school-based interventions, and public awareness campaigns. By educating the public on the importance of healthy family dynamics, individuals can learn to identify and address dysfunction early on, before it leads to more serious problems.

Finally, it is crucial to ensure that laws and policies are in place to protect children and families. This includes laws that protect children from abuse and neglect and provide access to support services for families in need. It also includes policies that support the provision of counseling services and other resources to help families overcome dysfunction and prevent juvenile delinquency.

*Here are some strategies that can be helpful:*

**Parental Education:** Providing parents with information and education on parenting skills and child development can help them understand the needs of their children better. This can include workshops, counseling, or support groups.

**Family therapy:** Family therapy can be a useful approach to address family dysfunction. It involves the participation of all family members to identify and address issues that contribute to family dysfunction and provide tools and strategies for resolving conflicts.

**Counseling for Children:** Children who are exposed to family dysfunction may benefit from counseling to help them deal with their emotions and build coping skills.

**Strengthening Community Support:** Community-based programs that provide support and resources to families can be helpful in preventing juvenile delinquency. This can include mentoring programs, after-school activities, and outreach to at-risk families.

**Early Intervention:** Early intervention programs can identify and address family dysfunction before it escalates into more significant issues. This can include screening programs, home visiting programs, and early childhood education.

**Legal Support:** Legal support can be provided to families to help them navigate the legal system and access resources to address family dysfunction. This can include legal aid services and advocacy.

**Addressing Cultural and Societal Norms:** In India, cultural and societal norms can contribute to family dysfunction. For example, gender inequality, strict hierarchical family structures, and pressure to conform to traditional gender roles can lead to conflict and stress within families. Addressing these cultural and societal norms through education and awareness campaigns can help reduce family dysfunction and prevent juvenile delinquency.

**Empowering Women and Girls:** Women and girls are often the most vulnerable in dysfunctional families. By empowering women and girls through education, economic opportunities, and legal protections, we can help prevent family dysfunction and promote healthy family relationships.

**Providing Positive Role Models:** Children who grow up in dysfunctional families may lack positive role models. Providing access to positive role models, including mentors and community leaders, can help children develop healthy relationships and prevent juvenile delinquency.

**Strengthening the Justice System:** The justice system can play a critical role in preventing juvenile delinquency by providing appropriate interventions and support to at-risk youth. This can include diversion programs, probation, and community-based rehabilitation programs.

#### **TRENDS IN JUVENILE OFFENDING IN INDIA**

A country's legal system's approach to dealing with juvenile offenders is significantly impacted by the legal definition of a juvenile. A kid or minor cannot be subjected to the same levels of stress as an adult, both in accordance with international standards and the Indian Juvenile Justice System. For this very reason, the juvenile justice system, and not the adult criminal justice system, is responsible for custody matters involving minors. They are never eligible for confinement or execution.

Therefore, under Indian law (Art. 40 (3) (a) of CRC), state parties must authorise formation of the youngest age below which a child is deemed not to have the capacity to depart from the criminal law. The age of criminal responsibility is established as seven years. According to the legislation (section 82 of IPC, 1860), a child cannot be evaluated as such if he or she is younger than seven years old. According to section 83 of the Indian Penal Code (1860), a kid under the age of 12 who does not have sufficient maturity to determine the nature and consequences of his or her behaviour is not guilty of an offence.

Juvenile delinquency, meanwhile, has been on the rise in India's capital of Delhi and other parts of the country. Fears in the country have increased as a result of the involvement of minors in heinous crimes such as murder, attempted murder, and abduction. Many voices have raised concerns about the lenient approach of the Juvenile Justice System to serious offences in the wake of the December 2012 gang rape in Delhi (or Nirbhaya case, as it is commonly known). Juvenile offenders in India require a new explanation and approach when it was discovered that today's youngsters are capable of the same level of violence as older adults. Psychiatrists now report that patients of all ages, including teenagers and adults, find their online activities satisfying. According to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the number of crimes committed by minors, especially those between the ages of 16 and 18, has increased.

*A youngster with only one parent can rest assured that their safety will be ensured by the following items:*

a. Talk to them and focus on children. Bring to light any intriguing discrepancies. Children need protection from their parents' fighting. Do not pressure them into choosing a side.

b. Take care of your own feelings. Because of the dissolution of your marriage or other significant relationship, you may be wracked by feelings of guilt and self-loathing. These rude behaviors can spread quickly.

c. Think optimistically. Children raised by one parent often learn self-reliance by being required to take on additional responsibility. You can rest guaranteed that you will acknowledge their help and lavish them with praise.

d. Maintain a reasonable budget and savings rate. Establish spending priorities that reflect children's needs (rather than wants).

e. Take Advantage of Public Chains. A strong social support system was hypothesized to be at fault. Single parents who need support should not be shy about reaching out to friends and relatives, networking with other single parents, or consulting a therapist.

## CONCLUSION

Children from single-parent households, especially those headed by the mother, are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior than those raised in intact homes, according to research. One significant factor related to children's welfare is the absence of dads. This includes issues like rising rates of juvenile criminality, depression, eating disorders, teen suicide, and exploitation. Care giving has a significant influence on whether or not a youngster will become a juvenile delinquent. Many different traits have been identified as sources of abnormal behavior. An abundant imprint on a child's sensitivity and reliability can be made by a parent maintaining a regular supper hour and reviewing homework. Delinquent behavior in children has been linked to a strong parent-child bond, according to research.

The community's engagement and awareness is crucial in addressing the complexities of juvenile delinquency. Precautionary actions are crucial in the administration of Juvenile Justice. Educating the public on the issues of abandoned children and youngsters in difficult circumstances would help immensely in the rehabilitation process. Adolescents who engage in deviant behavior or whose actions cannot be organized resourcefully by their parents may find it difficult to report drugs in some casual shapes, such as recorded inhabited connotations in dissimilar zones.

The family unit serves as a primary social regulatory and socialization council. To better involve families and other important groups in protective dealings so that society as a whole can be safer.

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#### Results:

The study findings suggest that family dysfunction is a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency in India. The study identified various forms of family dysfunction prevalent in India, including parental neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, and poverty. It was found that these problems can have a significant impact on children's development, leading to delinquent behavior.

