
Juvenile delinquency is also known as teenage crime. Parents, friends and teachers are all responsible along with the juvenile who commit a crime. This is why courts do not punish the teenagers like they punish the adults when they commit a crime. There are separate juvenile courts and the purpose of juvenile punishment is to help the teenager understand the importance of staying away from crimes. There are various theories of juvenile delinquency and various researchers have reported different reasons of delinquency. Most of the delinquent teenagers belong from low social, economical or psychological background. Some of the most common causes of juvenile delinquency are as follows.

Family:

Family is the basic socialization agency for the children. Children learn basic concepts about good and bad from their family, they make their values and set the norms of society. Family can make or break the personality of the children. In family the most important role is played by the parents and siblings. Most of the adolescents who show delinquent behavior in any form belong to families that could not give firm foundation to the children. Broken families, single parent families, separated families, frequent parents fight, lack of trust and confidence among the parents, criminal parents or psychological problems in parents can be the most important reason behind juvenile delinquency. The other reason can be siblings rivalry or unequal treatment between children. Parents and elder siblings have the responsibility to mold the personality of the children. When parents or siblings do not show moral behavior or they commit crime children or younger siblings also get motivation to do something bad a delinquent behavior.

Family plays a huge part in the development of an adolescent, both positive and negative. Adolescents learn what is and is not acceptable by the surrounding environments, which is dominated by the family life. For example, if a father disrespects and hits a mother, then a son might consider this as acceptable and copy it later in his life.

Coming from a broken home through abandonment or divorce can profoundly affect a teen's perception of life. Sometimes in these situations, a teen can be neglected, punished too harshly or not regularly disciplined. Any of these conditions can cause juvenile delinquency as the teen has missed out on complete moral development.

- Economic problems in family

Often the cause of juvenile delinquency is economic problems in family. Youth belonging from poor economical status easily get involved in criminal activities. They want to improve their status and for this purpose they use negative path, in this regard often people do not support teenagers who belong from poor status and they go for criminal activities.

- Psychological problems in family

Psychological problems in parents or siblings can also be a risk factor of juvenile delinquency. Mental illnesses or other psychological problems like depression, frustration, aggression or hyper behavior showed by the parents can make the child feel deprived and inferior among friends. Sometimes children adopt depression and anger from parents or elder siblings.

- Social problems in family

In many families parents or elder siblings are involved in various social problems. There can be various problems like gender discrimination, age discrimination, racial discrimination, child labor or violation of animal rights. Children and youth learn what they see in their family, in many rich

families parents do not feel shame in child labor and children could not understand that child labor is against society and against morality. Social problems cause stress and due to stress teens get involved in violence.

- Moral problems in family

Morality is the most important concern among teens today. Teens should know how to respect family and other people. They should give the due respect to everyone they know and meet. Some parents do not take care of their elders, and it is a known fact that such children who see their parents disrespecting their elders, their children never respect their parents and elder siblings.

- Parenting style

Parenting style also matters and many researchers say that it is one of the biggest reasons why teens commit crime. Parents are some time very harsh and they punish their children for small issues. Children start disrespecting their parents and they become violent.

Solution:

The family should have a positive attitude towards life and towards society. Parents and elder siblings should show the children positive values, norms and standards of society in this way the children will be able to show the right behavior to the society. Family is the role model of every child and a model behavior by the parents and siblings can give motivation to the child to behave positively.

Government should support families that have poor economic status so that they can improve their financial condition. Parents should also teach children the importance of respecting laws of society. Parents should tell their children the consequences of breaking laws that government has made for public safety and betterment. Parents should make sure that they observe equality of rights, justice and condemn discrimination.

Personal Reasons:

Sometimes parents or family has nothing to do with the delinquent behavior of the juvenile, neither does the teachers or neighborhood have to do with the delinquent behavior of the teenager. There are sometimes personal reasons responsible for the delinquent behavior. Sometimes the adolescent faces hardship in life due to some psychological or physical problem that he is going through. A physical handicap will go through many problems in life as the society does not accept a person who does not have similar capacities and abilities that a normal person has. Society is often cruel towards a handicap and this unequal and unjust attitude of the society develops negative feelings in the person. The negative feelings make the person commit crime even if he belongs to a good family. This is a very common reason for committing crime in adolescence. Those adolescents who are suffering from some psychological or physical problem want to take revenge from society, friends, family or peer group.

In modern society racial differences are also a very strong reason behind juvenile delinquency. Racial differences can cause several big crimes by the adolescents as adolescents become aggressive and they want to take revenge from the society for the unequal treatment that the society shows to them. Drug use is also a very common cause of juvenile delinquency. Those juveniles who use drugs usually get involved in criminal activities as most of their friends belong to criminal class.

- Social concerns

Teenage boys and girls go through several social problems when they are not well socialized human beings. Some teens are very harsh and rude to talk and they cannot control their anger or aggression as it is in their nature. Most of the gender biased boys talk to the opposite sex like they are slaves

and they do not respect them. Their violence and aggression make them commit crimes that other boys will never do.

- Psychological concerns

Psychological and mental concerns are also important when talking about juvenile delinquency. Mental disability is another big cause of juvenile delinquency. Mentally ill boys or girls can commit any crime without knowing the consequences of it. Statistics show that mental illnesses are one of the biggest reasons behind juvenile delinquency in America and other developed countries.

- Drug use

Drug use has become widespread among teenage boys and girls. Drug use is prohibited by laws in many societies. Drug use in youth can be dangerous as they can commit violent crimes when they take drugs.

- Physical concerns

Physical disabilities can also cause juvenile delinquency. Juveniles that are physically or mentally handicapped usually want to take revenge from other people for their complexes. They want to achieve success in life using negative means.

Solution:

Parents can take the responsibility of fighting against any odd that their children have in their personality. Children especially teenage children have not reached the age of maturity where they know the difference between good and bad. Their parents do know what's good and what's not and they should keep an eye on their children. They should know about the friends of their children and their other mates. In case of any disability parents and teachers should talk to the teens about their problems and they should try to solve their problems. From early childhood parents should ensure that their children meet people of their age and know how to behave in the society.

Peer group influence:

Peer group is a very strong force that can cause delinquent behavior in the adolescent. When friends commit crime adolescents often learn to do it and they cannot understand the consequences of the crime. Peer group rejection can also be the cause of juvenile delinquency. Adolescents can also show delinquent behavior when they cannot get similar resources as their friends have. Parents should ensure that their children are hanging out with friends who belong to their class as this will prevent adolescent jealousy which can cause several crimes in adolescents. Parents should also see that their children are going out with good friends that belong to respectable families. They should not become part of any gang.

- Gangs and cliques

Youth can easily become part of a gang or clique during their age they think it appropriate to be powerful and to be part of a large group. Often strong groups and gangs are ones that are indulged in negative actions. Peer group influence can be positive and it can be negative.

- Abusive behavior

Abusive behavior is the first step towards committing crimes. When teens become part of a clique that is abusive and that does not know how to behave the teen also gets involved in negative means.

- Peer group rejection

Sometimes youth do not get acceptance in any group as they do not have a strong personality and due to peer group rejection they commit crimes.

Solution:

Peer group influence is very strong on teens and parents should see the friends of their children. They should create a healthy and friendly relationship with their children. In this way children feel free to share anything and everything with their parents.

Society:

Society itself sometimes become very negative and create difficulties for the youth. Society is a strong force in developing personality of the teens. Developing negative feelings from society can become a reason behind juvenile delinquency.

- Labeling

Labeling can destroy the personality of the youth and make the teen a criminal forever. Labeling means that society labels a teen criminal once he commits a crime, though this is his first time but due to the tagging he will perceive himself a criminal. He will repeat similar crime or other crimes in future. He will no longer feel any embarrassment in committing crimes.

There are many factors that contribute to juvenile crime, including, but not limited to, poor education, low school attendance, peer pressure, disadvantaged socioeconomic status, and substance abuse. Criminal psychology degree programs look at each of these factors to understand how they affect youth and how these negative influences can be curtailed.

In the fields of criminal psychology and criminology, a great deal of academic attention has been placed on juvenile crime. And with good reason—the most recent data from the National Center for Juvenile Justice shows that [juveniles constitute around 1 in 4 arrests for property crimes](#), such as burglary, criminal mischief, and disorderly conduct.

It is clear that the propensity for criminal behavior begins much earlier than adulthood. Post-secondary [criminology degree programs](#) recognize the need for intervention at a young age, and that in order to prevent juvenile crime, its causes must first be understood.

The factors that drive a young person to crime can be complex—many times, a combination of factors interact and play off of each other—and unraveling these negative influences can be challenging. In order to fight criminal behavior at the root, criminology professionals frequently begin by understanding the broad social, political, and environmental factors that have been shown to influence teen criminal behavior.

Insufficient Education

Criminology data regarding undereducated children and juvenile crime show a strong correlation. From an early age, failure at school is an important factor for predicting future criminal behavior. In fact, a [25 year-long study](#) of 1,500 children in low-income inner-city Chicago neighborhoods found that children who attended a high-quality preschool were 28% less likely to develop drug problems or be incarcerated in adulthood. Additionally, they were 22% less likely to be arrested for a felony and 24% more likely to attend a four-year college.

In our nation's failing public schools, children experience "overcrowded classrooms, a lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient funding for 'extras' such as counselors, special education services, and even textbooks."¹ These inadequacies are what the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) says are the beginning of the [School-to-Prison pipeline](#), the policies and practices of the American school system that push many schoolchildren on a path to incarceration.

If children have poor academic performance, poor attendance, face expulsion or drop out of school, their probability of committing crime is magnified. Leaving school early reduces the chance that juveniles will develop the social skills that are gained in school, such as learning to meet deadlines, following instructions, and being able to deal constructively with their peers. A child without a proper education will eventually learn that he or she is at a disadvantage in the workforce. This feeling of hopelessness, exacerbated by the national media's emphasis on low employment numbers and fiscal crises, can create an environment ripe for juvenile crime.

Peer Pressure

Adolescence can be a painful time of growing into oneself and seeking acceptance from peers and social groups. Wanting to fit in and be accepted often serves as motivation for teens to succumb to peer pressure. In a recent survey of nearly 1,000 teenagers, only 10% said that they had not been influenced by peer pressure². Young people cite peer pressure as one of the major reasons they engage in risky behavior, such as teen sex, reckless driving, alcohol, drug and tobacco-use, crime and gang activity.

In some societies, especially inner-city areas, it is common knowledge that gang activity is high and many teens become involved. What is becoming further understood is how gang, drug and other criminal activity can be profoundly influenced by [peer contagion](#), a phenomenon whereupon deviant behavior committed by one adolescent is transferred or transmitted to other adolescents. Interestingly, the ripple effect of peer contagion has impact on groups of teens in geographic areas such as neighborhoods, subsequently forming gang territories.

Peer pressure is such an integral part of gang activity that the New York City Police Department has developed a [unique "forced outreach" program](#). The purpose of the program is to track at-risk teenagers and separate them from the negative influences of gang activity in an attempt to sever this emotional entanglement, giving these teens the space to make better choices. Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory, which predicts that an individual will choose the criminal path when the majority of his/her learned attitudes, which are influenced by their social group, view law-breaking as favorable. This learned behavior, and the powerful influence of the social group on attitudes toward lawlessness, aptly explain how peer influences can affect juvenile crime in a negative way.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse on its own can affect cognitive development, lowering a young person's inhibitions and ability to assess risks. It is also a powerful contributor to crime when combined with other factors mentioned here.

Abuse and Truancy

Absenteeism from school and drug use are causally interlinked, as one begets the other. Teens who abuse drugs or alcohol are far more likely to skip school than their drug-free peers⁴ and students who skip school are more likely to try drugs for the first time or escalate their drug use⁵. Truancy can negatively impact grades, which can create a vicious circle of low education, low self-esteem, and low

expectations for their future careers and ability to acquire material goods legally. As already established, failure at school is a major risk factor for schoolchildren exhibiting future criminal behavior, facing arrest and incarceration.

Prescription Drugs

What may begin as a “borrowed” painkiller pill every so often has the real potential to develop into a full-blown addiction. The easy access to prescription drugs for non-medical use is staggering. Teenagers are much more likely to get prescriptions drugs for free from a friend or relative than buy it from a stranger or a dealer³—and when the source of the medication is gone (a parent is no longer managing pain, or the supplies run out), the teen may turn to theft, or other criminal means, to continue the addiction.

Lest parents, law enforcement or policy makers think that illicit drugs like cocaine, heroin, MDMA and marijuana are the only dangers teens face, the 2014 findings from a report entitled “[Monitoring the Future](#)” conducted annually by the National Institute on Drug Use surveyed more than 40,000 8th, 10th and 12th graders, show that among 12th graders, the non-medical use of Adderall (amphetamine and dextroamphetamine) is two-and-a-half times as prevalent as cocaine. Furthermore, between three and five percent of high school seniors reported that they have used either OxyContin or Vicodin in the past year for non-medical reasons.

This situation is especially dangerous because teens who abuse prescription drugs may do so because they don’t understand the risks involved. Teens may assume that because a medication was prescribed by a doctor, it must be safe. The legal system, however, disagrees.

Legally, OxyContin is classified as a narcotic; Vicodin – just like heroin – is classified as an opiate. It is a criminal offense to use these drugs without a prescription and prosecutors have brought charges for the sale and distribution of such drugs to others. For high-school seniors aged 18 or older, this is especially problematic, as they may be charged as adults.

Lack of Strong Moral Guidance

Acts of crime are innately moral actions, and as such, [criminologists](#) and sociologists have studied morality and its importance to criminal behavior. Children learn right from wrong by following adult examples throughout childhood—from their parents, if parents are present in the family, from grandparents, nuclear family members, social groups, and other authoritative influences. In the absence of these concerned adults and positive i

Family Issues

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2

Outside Influences

Outside influences or other things out of anyone's control can be the causes of juvenile delinquency. Within society, there are several external forces that can lead an adolescent in the wrong direction.

- Drug use is becoming a widespread crime and concern among adolescents. Alcohol and drug abuse can lead to criminal behavior as teens lose control or turn dangerous due to the effects these illegal substances have on mood, cognitive thought and personality.
- Sometimes a teen has faced the hardship of a physical or mental disability. Society can be very judgmental of individuals with handicaps. Because their judgment can be impaired, these adolescents may want to get revenge towards those perceived as against them.
- Peer pressure and influence is a very powerful motivator in a teen's life. Sometimes a boy or girl will commit a crime because their friends have pressured or dared them to do it. At other times, an adolescent may be jealous of a friend who has more and is motivated to steal so he or she can possess the same materialistic items.

3

Mass Media and Technology

The mass media continually widen their reach into households. At present, the mass media can easily reach even very young children in their homes. As much as parents try to protect their children from negative news and non-appropriate media, it is almost impossible.

Television, radio and computers contribute to the increase in the exposure of juveniles to mass media content. Since knowledge is carried around in the palm of their hands, adolescents often have an inflated sense of independence. While it is true they have easier and quicker access to information, they do not understand the true mean of being independent or are not mature enough to handle it.

The violent content in television shows and movies can impact juveniles' behavior. When a juvenile watches violent content, he becomes a passive recipient of such content. The juvenile could easily imitate violence and aggression he sees on TV and in the movies. **The violent content of many video games lead to** In exposure to violent video games, juveniles have an active role. Video games require players to decide and perform in the games. The frequent prolonged exposure to video game violence leads juveniles to adopt violent traits based on these juveniles' game characters. Video games can lead to higher risk of violent behavior among juveniles. The young video game player becomes more exposed to violent content and adopts violent traits in his behavior.

Such violent content in online mass media leads to negative changes in juvenile behavior. Prolonged and repeated exposure to violent online content encourages young people to develop similarly violent behaviors.

How Certain Types of Music Affect Juvenile Behavior

Certain types of music, such as gangster rap, are a potential factor leading to juvenile delinquency. Music is a means of delivering messages to listeners. In music like gangsta rap, violence and aggression are easily observed. Music like gangsta rap typically sends a message of violence and aggression. Vulnerable juvenile listeners can easily tune in to the message and adopt delinquent violent and aggressive behaviors.

The labeling of music also matters. If a juvenile realizes that his favorite gangsta rap music is associated with gang crime, he would likely link violence and crime to such music. This makes him aware that he likes the sense of violence and crime in music, leading to two possible effects:

Solutions to Solve/Prevent the Problem

Family and society should not give up hope when it comes to the causes of juvenile delinquency. There are many preventative measures and possible solutions to teenage crime. Sometimes one method is not enough. Often it takes a combination of different measures to successfully make a difference in an adolescent's life.

1

Be a Model

Family plays a huge part in how a teenager views society and what is right or wrong. How members treat each other and those around them influences a young person's attitude and outlook. Parents, siblings, and other family members have a responsibility to be a role model for developing adolescents. These youth look to them to teach them how to behave and interact with others. They are also the moral backbone of the family and influence teens on what are acceptable ways of thinking and acting.

2

Know Your Kids

Take the initiative to learn about your child's circle of friends, get to know their teachers and find out more about the people they interact with on a regular basis. Teenagers are still developing mentally and are easily influenced. They need parent's guidance to figure out the difference of good or bad. Causes of juvenile delinquency include lack of parent responsibility to teach them moral behavior.

3

Talk with Teenagers

Parents should speak to teenagers about society, sexual development, peer pressure, positive and negative relationships and other aspects of life that can either lead them in the right direction or steer them down the wrong path. They should have an open line of communication so that their teenage child feels comfortable approaching them with questions or concerns, both negative and positive. Also let them know that there are consequences for illegal behavior and committing crimes.

4

Maintain a Good Relationship

When parents have a friendly relationship with their teenager, it can help prevent the causes for juvenile delinquency. A healthy relationship allows their child to feel free to discuss anything with their parents. Sometimes one parent is better at this than the other, but this is okay. As long as the teen has a parent he can turn to, it will very beneficial.

5

Limit Media Access

It may be hard, but is very important. Not only can teenagers learn illegal behavior or have access to inappropriate material, they can also fall prey to online predators. Sometimes when a teenager is a victim of a crime, he/she will commit the same crime as an attempt to overcome the stress or guilt.

It will take a lot of control and supervision and it must be handled in a way that a teen does not think his/her privacy has been violated. Often the best thing to do is just be straight forward in the beginning, laying out the rules right away so there are no justifiable objections later.

6

Seek Professional Help

Parents also need to realize it is okay to seek professional help when needed. Guidance counselors at school can help. There are professional psychologists and psychiatrists who specialize in adolescent and family issues. Some social workers are trained to deal with teenage problems. There are several therapy groups for juvenile delinquents. There are also community and government resources available to families who cannot afford these services.