

What is juvenile delinquency? Discuss the causes of juvenile delinquency. Suggest some measures to minimize delinquent behaviour.

Ans: Juvenile Delinquency :

Juvenile delinquency is one of the most serious problems of our society. It is a common problem among adolescent. They are prone to commit delinquent acts because, with the onset of adolescence, the individual is able to move around with the gang and follow his group or his individual inclinations to a great extent. Secondly, the adolescents desire for new experiences together with his partly developed philosophy of life results in his taking unwise decisions. Majority of the delinquents detained belonged to 16-20 age group, followed by those who were 12 or 13.

Juvenile delinquency may be defined as social offence committed by a young person, below the age of 18. In other words, it amounts to violations of "Conduct norms." Psychologically, delinquency is not a distinct entity, but rather one form of emotional disturbance.

From legal point of view delinquency is a norm-violating behaviour. From social point of view,

delinquency means only a form of behaviour which is detrimental to the well being of society.

According to Coleman (1981), Delinquency refers to behaviour of youths under 18 years of age which is not acceptable to society and is generally regarded as calling for some kind of admonishment, punishment or corrective actions."

The basic cause of delinquency is the frustration of some kind. The adolescents needs for security, independence, recognition, affection are frequently thwarted to such an extent that anti-social behavior is employed in an effort to relieve the pent up emotions.

Some of the conditions of life which cause frustrations leading to delinquency are poverty, low intelligence, conflicts within the family, a broken home lack of affection from parents, lack of success in school, poor housing conditions and inferiority feelings arising from real or imagined physical deviations, Truancy, destruction of property, violent acts towards rivals, sexual offences, theft and other problems are considered as factors responsible for delinquent behaviour.

Thus delinquents are considered made not born. The various factors leads to delinquent behaviour are discussed below.

Causes of delinquency

1. Heredity

Psychologists have been making surveys of family trees to locate the causes of delinquency and crimes in the inheritance of the individual. Studies of family trees of Kalikaks, Jukes and Edward families prove that

intelligence and crimes are inherited from generation to generation.

Modern science of psychiatric genetics has little definite contribution to make to the study of delinquency other than that criminal tendencies are inborn.

Another theory stemming from the relationship between delinquency to body structure is of Kretschmer, a German who advanced a theory of body type to certain psychological phenomena as schizophrenia to asthenic, body-long muscular and lean manie bchav iour to pyknic type.

Current emphasis on the body type and its relationship to crime and delinquency appears in the studies of William Sheldon and the Gluecks.

According to Sheldon, the mesomorph (the muscular type) is more vulnerable to delinquency than ectomorph or the endomorph. Gluecks in their book *Physique and Delinquency* have reported physical factors that differentiate delinquents from non-delinquents.

According to some psychologists, an extra male chromosome predisposes males with the XYY condition to delinquent behaviour. This view had been discredited by Radcliffe (1974) on the basis of his survey on 000 babies.

2. **Environmental Factors**

Environmental factors which are responsible for delinquent acts will be studied under the sub-heads: (1) Ecological factor, (2) Home, (3) School, and (4) Society.

1. **Ecology and delillquency** : Ecology means the

effect of physical surroundings and climate on the growth and development of the organism, Burgess and Park in 1920 applied the ecological approach to the study of human community in Chicago University, They studied the social phenomena in Chicago city and related delinquency to the growth of the city.

The second important ecological study was conducted by Abbous and his friends, They concluded on the basis of their survey that :

- (a) Delinquents come from highly and densely populated areas and specially, limn 'v congested wards of the city.
- (b) High percentage of delinquents come from manufacturing, commercial plants and highly mdustnalized parts of the city.

2. Home and delinquency : The child is born in a definite family set-up. The home environmenr is important in developing the personality of the child. There is a face-to. face interaction in the family which determines the character and personality make-up of the child. There are some types of homes and family relationship which contribute to delinq uency in children :

(i) *Broken home* : All studies of delinquency prove that highest percentage of delinquents come from broken homes. There is close connection between broken home and delinquency as reported from court cases of delinquents :

- (a) Marital adjustment : If there is a quarrel between parents, and there is no

cooperation; this affects the mental health of the child.

- (b) Employed mother and father. If the parents are in service and the child is left in the care of a servant. The servants, in most cases, are responsible for initiating young children to delinquent acts at a very early stage. It has been proved that if the mother works out, the child cannot receive mother's attention and affection which he needs. Gluecks worked on the problem of working mother and delinquency.

They concluded that mothers working outside home are less effective with their children. The mothers of delinquents may represent a different breed, a group of women who wish to avoid their responsibilities of housework and child rearing. These working mothers have no direct control over their children.

- (ii) Poverty : Poverty is the mother of all the evils in the world. Poverty has been another explanation of delinquency. Due to poverty parents cannot fulfil the legitimate needs of their children. But it is not necessary that all delinquents come from poor homes. It is the administrative process which is in favour of rich people of the society. If a rich man's son commits some delinquent acts, he can avoid the legal procedure against him whereas a poor man's son is immediately caught.

- (iii) Disability of parents : If parents, both or one of them, are physically or mentally disabled, they cannot exercise control over their children, and there is every possibility of children being engaged in delinquent acts.
- (iv) Detective discipline : If the parents have no criteria of good discipline, sometimes they are too strict and sometimes too lenient. Such type of discipline creates mental conflicts in the mind of the child. If the parents quarrel, drink or criticize each other in presence of children, these acts will have bad effects on children.
- (v) Lack of affection : If the children are neglected and no attention is paid to them. If the children do not feel secure.
- (vi) Partiality of parents : If parents give partial treatment to their children, the children may develop antisocial feelings.

(3) School and delinquency : The following factors in school may lead to delinquency.

- (i) Location : If the school is located far away from the city or in industrial area near movie halls or undesirable markets then children may be tempted to engage in delinquent acts. In big cities, children go out at 9 a.m. and return at 5 p.m. There is no check on their activities during this period.
- (ii) Lack of discipline : If there is no discipline or the discipline is too strict, the children may become delinquent.
- (iii) Emotional climate : The emotional climate of the school has great influence on problem the

behaviour of children. If the climate is conducive there will be no problem. If teachers quarrel among themselves or with the administrator, and students are associated in the politics of leg-pulling, the climate of school becomes tense. The percentage of delinquency increases in such schools.

- (iv) **Partiality** : Sometimes teachers have their pets and they give them undue advantages. Their behaviour and treatment with children of the class is unfair and partial. This attitude, on the part of the teachers, creates hatred against the teacher and the pets. The children make groups. They quarrel with pets. Sometimes these quarrels result in permanent grouping among children.
- (v) **Lack of facilities like games and library** : Games are important to release the pent-up feelings of the day. Inside the class, students generally remain passive listeners. This passivity creates emotional stress which may be released in games. Schools which do not have these facilities, create more delinquents than schools having the said facilities.

4. **Society and delinquency** : The social environment also plays an important role in delinquency. The following factors may contribute to delinquency :

- (i) **Favouritism** : When there is preferred treatment to a community or class, the youth of other classes revolt against this favouritism.
- (ii) **Class conflict** : Indian society is full of classes and subclasses. There are conflicts between classes from generations.
- (iii) **Tension in time of war, partition and other natural**

calamity. The percentage of delinquency rises during the time of wars, earthquake, flood and other natural calamities.

Remedial measures/prevention of Delinquency.

The treatment of delinquent children is done by applying a psychological technique known as psychotherapy. The psychotherapist on the basis of his observation and magnitude of the problems of a delinquent child may use any of the following methods: (1) Re-education, (2) Abreaction, (3) Persuasion, (4) Suggestion and counselling, (5) Environmental treatment, and 6. Modern techniques of behaviour modification.

1. **Re-education** : The child has already learned antisocial behaviour. The aim of re-education is not meant to give him/her academic information but it simply means to build his/her self by giving information on sex problems and family relations. The aim of re-education is to clarify his/her ideas on different problems which he/she faces.
2. **Abreaction** : Abreaction means providing opportunity to the child to express his pent-up and suppressed emotional feelings by means of free-expression through discussion. The therapist becomes the parent figure in whom the child confides. He/She may use free association, psycho-drama or play techniques.
3. **Persuasion** : The therapist may persuade the delinquent not to indulge in delinquency in future. It is based on an appeal to the reason of the delinquent child. Persuasion should be logical and thorough which may appeal to the delinquent child. It has been reported by therapists

that persuasion is not of great value because it only removes the symptoms and not the underlying cause.

4. **Suggestion and counselling** : You will agree that everyone is suggestive and children are more suggestive than adults. Positive suggestions are given to strengthen the superego of the delinquents.
5. **Environmental treatment** : Environmental treatment is, generally, done by improving the home and school environment of the child. Parents are advised to change their attitude and better treatment is given to the child. Some psychotherapists propose that the delinquent child may be shifted to another better environment for a temporary period preferably in a lodging or foster home. It is expected that by placing the delinquent child in a new environment, he/she may give up his/her delinquent acts and may start his/her life afresh.
6. **Modern techniques of behaviour modification** : Almost all psychologists agree that delinquents are not born but they are the product of environmental influences. Antisocial behaviour is acquired or learned, so this type of behaviour can be modified by the same principles as other behaviours. An individual can learn constructive, socially acceptable behaviour by being placed in an environment where the behaviour consequences are programmed according to the principles of Programmed Learning recently developed by Prof. B.F. Skinner of Harvard University. Burchard (1967) launched a programme for mildly retarded delinquents. Delinquents were kept in residential schools and their behaviour was punished or reinforced systematically.