



YOUTH CRIMES IN INDIA: A CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This doctrinal research critically examines the current issues and challenges surrounding youth crime in India, with a focus on the impact of legislative changes, specifically the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021, and the growing influence of socio-digital factors. The study looks into how present legal frameworks approach rehabilitation and protection in a system with rising adolescent crime rates, as seen by trends in states such as Tamil Nadu. Using a doctrinal methodology and an examination of statutes, case law, and secondary materials, the study identifies fundamental flaws in legal classification, institutional capability, and preventative actions. It concludes with ten actionable recommendations aimed at improving judicial and administrative training, reforming specific legal provisions, bolstering cybercrime capabilities, strengthening mental health support, promoting skill-based rehabilitation, fostering community-based interventions, improving data collection, and ensuring robust inter-agency collaboration, all of which advocate for a more holistic and effective juvenile justice system in India.

KEYWORDS: Youth Crimes, Juvenile Delinquency, Contemporary Issues, Criminal Justice System

INTRODUCTION

India's demographic dividend, with its large youth population, brings enormous prospects as well as considerable concerns. One of the most important issues in today's Indian society is the rise in youth crime. Far from being a statistical outlier, teenage delinquency reflects broader societal fractures, economic inequities, psychological complexities, and shifting cultural standards. This essay looks into the present concerns and challenges confronting youth crime in

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India, addressing the diverse causes, limitations of the current legal framework, and the need for a more holistic and reformative approach.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In today's India, teenage crime is a multidimensional problem caused by a complex interaction of historical, legislative, socioeconomic, and modern causes. India's approach to juvenile justice has evolved significantly over time, from punitive colonial-era measures to the rehabilitative framework of the Children Act of 1960, the Juvenile Justice Act of 1986, and, most notably, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2000, which is in line with international conventions such as the UNCRC. In response to the public's demand for harsher punishments for heinous crimes, the Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 controversially changed the paradigm by permitting 16–18 years old to be tried as adults in certain situations. Increase in youth crime a ticking time bomb in India.²

This was further enhanced by the Amendment Act 2021, which although it sought to expedite adoption, controversially reclassified some serious offenses against children as non-cognizable, raising concerns about diminished child protection. The incidents of crimes by juveniles in Tamil Nadu have increased, with 2,607 cases registered in 2022 compared to 2,212 cases in 2021. Overall, Tamil Nadu is ranked fourth in the list. Nowadays a lot of difficulties faced by law enforcement and the juvenile justice system in India.³

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How will the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021 revisions affect juvenile rehabilitation and protection in India?
2. What contemporary socio-digital variables is driving youth criminality in India, and how is the existing justice system responding?

² <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20050131-youth-crime-a-ticking-time-bomb-in-india-788365-2005-01-30> (Last Seen by 11-06-2025)

³ <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20050131-youth-crime-a-ticking-time-bomb-in-india-788365-2005-01-30> (Last Seen by 12-06-2025)



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate critically how the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021, affects the fundamentals and real-world results of child protection and juvenile rehabilitation in India.
2. To determine and investigate the current socioeconomic inequalities and the widespread impact of digital technology as important contributors to juvenile delinquency in India.
3. To evaluate how well India's current juvenile justice system responds to and addresses the complex reasons and changing character of child crimes, as well as its shortcomings.
4. To make suggestions for a more comprehensive and reformatory strategy to address juvenile criminality, with the goal of filling in current legal loopholes and improving the efficacy of India's prevention and rehabilitation programs.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has adopted the only doctrinal method of doing legal research and used different tools of research like text books, journals, online resources and other necessary tools as per requirement.

SIGNIFICANCE

This study is extremely important since it explores India's growing young crime problem, which is a major concern for a country that depends on its demographic dividend. This study will critically analyze how recent legislative changes, like the reclassification of offenses, affect the core ideas of juvenile rehabilitation and child protection by offering a critical doctrinal analysis of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021. This is especially important considering the recorded increase in juvenile criminal cases in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the critical need for a precise assessment of the law's on-the-ground effectiveness. Furthermore, the study's emphasis on modern socio-digital variables as drivers of juvenile criminality, such as cybercrime and online fraud, tackles an ever-changing set of difficulties that



necessitate sophisticated legal and structural solutions. This study seeks to uncover crucial gaps by examining the capabilities and limitations of the current juvenile justice system in the light of these complex and growing causes. Finally, it aims to provide concrete recommendations for a more comprehensive and reformatory strategy that is critical for assuring the well-being and productive integration of India's youth, changing a potential societal issue into an opportunity for national growth.

RIGHT TO REMEDY UNDER JUDICIAL APPROACHES

In India, the right to remedy for juveniles in conflict with the law is deeply rooted in constitutional principles and uniquely shaped by the child-centric philosophy of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, as amended. Judicially, this right hinges on the alleged violation of a child's fundamental or statutory rights, with courts adopting a "parens patriae" approach, often leveraging Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to ensure access to justice for even the most vulnerable groups.⁴ The primary avenue for remedy involves approaching specialized bodies like Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) or Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) in the first instance, with higher courts (under Articles 32 and 226) exercising writ jurisdiction (Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, Certiorari, etc.) to address grave violations, ensuring strict adherence to due process and principles of natural justice, as seen in the emphasis on proper preliminary assessments⁵. Ultimately, the judicial approach prioritizes remedies aligned with the JJ Act's rehabilitative goals, such as the best interest of the child and the fresh start principle, directing interventions that promote reformation and social reintegration over punitive measures, thereby safeguarding the child's dignity and future.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN YOUTH DELINQUENCY

While access to education is generally seen as a protective factor against crime, in contemporary India, its failures or shortcomings can paradoxically contribute to youth criminality. This isn't a direct causal link from education itself, but rather stems from issues like the lack of access to

⁴ Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India is AIR 1984 SC 80

⁵ Shilpa Mittal v. State of NCT of Delhi is AIR 2020 SC 405



quality education, particularly for marginalized youth, leading to early school dropouts and a dearth of foundational skills necessary for legitimate employment and social mobility. Such educational deprivation often translates into unemployment and idleness, rendering youth highly susceptible to negative peer influences and recruitment by criminal elements. Furthermore, the stark disparities in educational quality and the intense academic pressure in competitive environments can foster frustration, resentment, and severe mental stress among students, sometimes leading to maladaptive coping mechanisms including substance abuse or impulsive criminal acts. Finally, the education systems insufficient emphasis on life skills, values, and responsible digital literacy can leave youth ill-equipped to navigate complex ethical dilemmas, resist online temptations, or prevent exposure to harmful content, inadvertently enabling their involvement in modern socio-digital crimes.⁶

PROMPTNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

This research on juvenile crimes in India must be completed quickly and effectively in order to be relevant and impactful in a continuously changing setting. Given the dynamic nature of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, which was significantly amended in 2015 and 2021, timely research ensures that the analysis of legal revisions and their practical implications remains current, directly informing ongoing policy debates and implementation strategies. Furthermore, with the rise of modern socio-digital crimes such as cybercrime and online fraud, timely interaction with current trends is critical for effectively representing present day concerns. To critically examine the Act's influence on juvenile rehabilitation and protection, a rigorous doctrinal study is required, which includes meticulous statutory interpretation and a comprehensive review of case law.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide District Magistrates with specialized training in child legislation and adoption to ensure fair and appropriate rulings.

⁶ The Constitution of India, 1950. (Articles 21, 32, 226)



2. Examine the 2021 law, which may make it more difficult to probe major child-related offenses promptly. We need to ensure that police can respond quickly to protect children.
3. Establish dedicated police teams for online offenses involving young people. They need to comprehend digital challenges.
4. Schools should teach students about internet safety and responsibility, including cyber bullying and frauds, starting at a young age.
5. Conduct extensive assessments of older youths (16-18) in serious circumstances to ensure fair outcomes.
6. All young offenders in juvenile homes should receive mandated therapy and mental health care. It's crucial for their recuperation.
7. Provide job training to young people in juvenile homes, assisting them in finding employment upon release.
8. Invest in local initiatives to prevent disturbed adolescents from entering the criminal justice system.
9. Develop a more comprehensive national system for tracking teenage crime data. This allows us to better understand the problem and find solutions.
10. Ensure that police, judges, social workers, and schools collaborate effectively and follow established regulations. When everyone is on the same page, children receive better support.

CONCLUSION

The rising trend of youth criminality in India, compounded by changing socio-digital landscapes and recent modifications to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2021, poses substantial problems to the country's justice and welfare systems. This study has found that, while legislative intent frequently favors rehabilitation, practical implementation is hampered by ambiguities in legal classifications, insufficient training for key stakeholders such as District Magistrates, and a pressing need for specialized responses to new-age offenses like cybercrime. The use of rigorous doctrinal analysis demonstrated that present systemic flaws, such as insufficient mental health care, restricted vocational training, and fragmented interagency cooperation, hamper effective rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders. To truly transform this demographic concern into an opportunity for national growth, the proposed



comprehensive strategy must be implemented, fine-tuning the argumentative provisions of the 2021 Act, investing in specialized training for all personnel, strengthening cybercrime countermeasures, improving rehabilitative infrastructure, and fostering seamless collaboration across all involved agencies. Only by taking such a multifaceted and child-centered strategy can India assure justice, protection, and a genuine fresh start for its youngsters in confrontation with the law.

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