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**CLASSIFICATION OF JUVENILE AND NON-
JUVENILE DELINQUENTS IN HEALTH
ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT**

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Classification of Juvenile and Non-Juvenile Delinquents in Health Adjustment and Social Adjustment

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Abstract – Humankind has long been preoccupied with its youth. In the collective life of societies, each new generation of young people has been rightly perceived as the rather fragile vessel by which the best of the past of hard-won fruits of our painful and slippery steps up from the primordial mists – is transmitted into the present. Delinquency constitutes one of the major social problems in both developed and developing societies. It refers to behaviour 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 action. Thus delinquent behaviour may range from truancy to incorrigibility and the use of illicit drugs to commitment of murder and other serious crimes. It may be pointed out that the actual incidence of juvenile delinquency is difficult to determine, since many delinquent acts are neither reported nor processed in the criminal justice system.

Keywords: Societies, Delinquency, Punishment

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INTRODUCTION

Some observes, young people are more rootless, more troubled emotionally, more promiscuous sexually, and less idealistic than their peers in earlier generations. As evidence, they point to rising rates of delinquency, drug use, adolescent suicide, the current epidemic of adolescent pregnancy, and a growing preoccupation with self-fulfillment at the expense of societal concerns (Conger, 1981; Wolf, 1986). Other observers assure us that today's youth are better informed about the world in which they live than any generation in history; no less idealistic, though more pragmatic and less sentimental; more open, honest and tolerant, and less given to viewing others in terms of simplistic stereotypes; no more, and perhaps less promiscuous than their elders were at the same age and more caring and responsible but less hypocritical. We are informed by these optimistic observers that youth today have, if anything, a cleaver sense of their own identity and are less emotionally conflicted than their presents were at the same age. Yet another group of observers feels that presumed differences – good or bad between today's adolescents and those of earlier generations are largely illusory and more a matter of form than substance; or that they stem from unwarranted generalizations based on the behaviour

of numerically small numbers of a typical young people. Proponents of this latter view remind in that there have always been difference between generations in social and political beliefs, tastes and fashions, and fundamental liberalism or conservatism (Mussen, et al., 1974).

Young children do not have a complex and realistic a view of themselves and their world as they will have at a later age. They have less self-understanding and have not yet developed a stable sense of identity and an adequate frame of reference regarding reality, possibility and value. Immediately perceived threats are tempered less by considerations of the past or future and thus tend to be seen as disproportionately important. As a results, children often have more difficulty in coping with stressful events than do adults (Compas & Epping, 1993; Kepel Benson & Ollendick, 1993).

Children also are more dependent on other people than are adults. Though in some ways this dependency serves as a buffer against other dangers, it also makes them highly vulnerable to experiences of rejection, disappointment, and failure. On the other hand, although their in experience and lack of self-sufficiency make them easily upset by

problems that seem minor to the average adult, children typically recover more quickly from their hurts (Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 1998). Moreover, many problematic behaviours and threats to adjustment emerge over the course of normal development (Kazdin, 1992). Indeed, several behaviours that characterize maladjustment or emotional disturbance are relative common in childhood. Despite the somewhat distinctive characteristics of childhood disturbances at different ages, there is no sharp line of demarcation between the maladaptive behaviour patterns of childhood and those of adolescence, nor between those of adolescence and those of adulthood.

So far criminal behaviour is concerned; there is also a difference of age and punishment system between a child criminal and an adult criminal. The child criminal is called juvenile delinquent whereas an adult criminal is called basically a criminal.

MEANING AND CONCEPT

Despite the attention it is currently receiving, delinquency is not a new phenomenon. Three hundred years ago John Locke, the great English educator, deplored delinquency is much the same vein as we do today. Six thousand years ago, an Egyptian priest carved on a stone, "Our earth is degenerate... children no longer obey their parents". Nevertheless current rates of delinquency are reason for serious concern, not only in the India, but in most other countries as well.

From the beginning, in every civilized society, a definite punishment system was prevailing to check the criminal behaviours. According to sociologists the ancient punishment system did not discriminate between the criminal according to their age, sex or situations. After a long period, a liberal and reformatory view was developed regarding the punishment of children. In this connection, initiative was taken by Chancery Court of London in 1775, who has given some special facilities to the criminals of certain age groups (under, 18). It was the beginning and on this account special courts and reformatory centres are established in different parts of the world.

SOCIOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS:

"Delinquent behaviour included such acts as destruction of property, violence against other people, and various behaviours contrary to the needs and rights of others and in violation of society's law."

- Henggeler, 1989.

DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT

It has been observed that the delinquents differ more or less from the normal population in their range of intelligence, educational achievement, personality, their adjustment to the problems of life and both the nature and the rate of their emotional development.

The I.Q. of several delinquent groups have been found out to distributed themselves in a normal scatter, but with the centre at some point between 82 and 88 instead of at normal 100. The extreme usually vary from below 50 to above 150. The majority of these delinquents (60%) could be classed as normal or low normal, 4 per cent were bright and 2 per cent brilliant, 11 per cent border line and 21 per cent definitely defective (Quay, 1965).

There seems to be little, if anything the matter with the native social capacities of the delinquents, although many of them become maladjusted because they express their social talents in anti-social ways. In general, they make friends readily. Some delinquents have district qualities of leadership. Williams (1934) has observed the participation in social activities of 100 delinquents and 100 non-delinquents boys of the same age and intelligence. The delinquent boys showed greater increase in participation from the lower to high ages than the non-delinquent and a consistently higher average participation at all ages. In his paper, delinquents were unpopular, enough with their teachers and other school officials. But once they are on play round, they participate freely and naturally in whatever is going on.

Those who have studied delinquents, regard them as emotionally unstable individuals. They are bored with ordinary ways of living and thus they want excitement and change. They have unusual reactions to the stressed of everyday life. They will not submit to normal social restrictions but set about making their own rules. All observations and tests show that delinquents differ from normal children mainly in their emotional reactions. In the study of Williams (1934), it was found that of 1343 delinquents 97 per cent showed emotional disturbances in their home relationship.

The delinquent child has usually failed to develop normal emotional ties with his family. He generally shows little attachment to his parents. He does not want to follow their guidance or to obey them and he reacts against them by doing deliberately the things to which they object. Such degree of maladjustment with the home is likely to produce a neurotic child. Many delinquents are neurotic but they differ from non-

delinquent neurotic children by being more aggressive, more active, and more sociable (Stern, 1946).

Two special type of delinquents might be mentioned briefly as the defective delinquents and the psychopathic delinquents. The former is below normal in mentality and the shows marked inability to adjust to his environment. He differs from the non-defective delinquents by being stupid showing less vitality and having an inferior constitutional endowment. The progress of such a child is poor. He develops inferior timidity, extreme maladjustment and insufficient intelligence to compensate for either the psychopathic delinquent. According to Shot well (1946) psychopathic delinquents are definitely abnormal in his reaction to environmental pressures. Many chronic sex offenders are of this type.

Hearly and Broner (1946) have given a most comprehensive picture of the difference between delinquent and non-delinquent children with the findings for 105 delinquent each of whom was paired with a non-delinquent sibling. The two children of each pair, therefore, had the same home and neighborhood influences although the treatment of the two by their parents was sometime dissimilar. Both members of each pair were carefully studied. However, the delinquents were more nervous and neurotic; hyperactive and dominating; they felt unwanted and inferior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

So far we have been examining the theoretical explanations of delinquency, its meaning and concept, types, causes, characteristics, rehabilitation and its linkage with anxiety, socio-economic status and adjustment with regards to home, health, social, emotional and overall areas. In this connection, it is now proposed to highlight empirical bases of delinquent behaviours and their linkage with certain socio-psychological variables.

HEALTH ADJUSTMENT

Health adjustment was defined in terms of mental and physical illness. Physically as well as mentally unhealthy person are sad, depressed, short tempered, anxious and showing maladjusted behaviours. Is any connection exists between health adjustment and delinquency among the adolescents? To answer this question, in the present paper, it was hypothesized that "the two groups, identified as delinquents and

non-delinquents do not differ significantly from each other in terms of their health adjustment". To verify this hypothesis the two groups were compared in respect of their scores on health adjustment dimensions. The findings were summarized in table 1.

Table-1

Comparison of Delinquent and Non-delinquent Subjects in respect of their Health Adjustment

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Delinquent	120	13.11	7.52	3.11*
Non-delinquent	120	10.24	6.90	

* Significant at .01 level.

From table-1, it is evident that the delinquent subjects have scored (Mean = 13.11) significantly higher (indicative of poor adjustment in health dimension) on Bell Adjustment Inventory in respect of their no delinquent counterparts (Mean = 10.24). The comparison of two means ($t=3.11$) was also found to be significant beyond .01 level of confidence. It indicates that the two groups, the delinquent and non-delinquent differ significantly in terms of their health adjustment. It is also obvious from the findings as presented in table-1 that delinquents have more health problem than non-delinquents or normal adolescents. Therefore, the null hypothesis formulated in the present context is being rejected by the present findings.

The findings of the present paper are in expected direction and matched with our day-to-day observations. Delinquents due to their criminal environment face more restrictions and apathy from their family members as well as from the society. In particular, they appeared to feel less capable of establishing close personal relationships with either peers or adults, especially the letters. They described themselves as having fearless interests in life, and emerged as generally lacking in enthusiasm. Not expectedly, they appeared significantly less impressed by the dominant ethical values and goals of own culture than their non-delinquent matches. These all conditions produce more tension, anxiety and stresses among them and ultimately they suffer from certain health problems.

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Social adjustment is expressed in terms of shyness, submissiveness, introversion, affiliation, belongingness etc. A person's behaviour depends upon his social interactions, relations, and so on. Keeping this in view, in the present paper, it was hypothesized that "the two groups identified as delinquent and non-delinquent do not differ significantly in terms of their social adjustment. To test this hypothesis the two groups were compared statistically and findings were summarized in table-2.

Table-2

Comparison of Delinquent and Non-delinquent Subjects in respect of their Social Adjustment

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Delinquent	120	12.25	4.86	1.70*
Non-delinquent	120	11.16	5.24	

* Not Significant.

The findings as summarized in table 4.04 reveal that delinquents have scored (Mean = 12.25) higher (indicative of poor adjustment in social area) on social dimension of Bell Adjustment Inventory in comparison to the non-delinquents. The obtained t-value between the two groups was, however, found to be insignificant beyond chance ($t=1.70$, $df = 238$, $p > .05$). It indicates that the two groups do not differ significantly in terms of their social adjustment. In other words, we can say that the social adjustment of the respondents does not corroborate significantly to the delinquency among them. Thus, the null hypothesis formulated in the present paper gains support from the present findings. The findings of the present paper are in expected direction and matched with our day to day observations. In fact, in behaviour or in practice delinquents/ criminal are not less social than any non-delinquent adolescents. In some studies, it was found that delinquents are intelligent and contact better in the society. Nevertheless, most delinquents are at least average in I.Q. and of itself does not appear to be a primary factor in delinquency in majority of cases. However, in some studies, it was found that delinquents appeared to feel less capable of establishing close personal relationship with either peers or adults, especially the letters. Not expectedly, they appeared significantly less impressed by the dominant ethical values and goals of own culture than their non-delinquent matches. They also appeared

significantly more likely than the non-delinquents to respond to environmental pressures with hostility, rejection, or simply withdrawal from the situation, rather than by acceptance, either for their own sake or that of others. On the basis of above discussion, it is obvious that social adjustment of the adolescents has direct or indirect link with their delinquency. However, due to the lack of empirical support and insignificant research findings, the findings of the present paper cannot be generalized. Some more and more studies are needed in this direction.

CONCLUSION

Health, emotional and over-all adjustment were also found to be significant in affecting the delinquent behaviour among the subjects. Delinquents have scored significantly higher in these three adjustment areas as compared to the non-delinquents. Social adjustment was found to be insignificant in affecting the delinquent behaviour among the subjects. Although delinquents have scored higher on this dimension than non-delinquents, the statistical analysis was found to be insignificant beyond chance. It may be pointed out that psychological variables as covered in the present paper are not exhaustive. Some attempts should also be made to highlight the role of motivational structure, parental behaviour, insecurity and value system of the male as well as female adolescents in the development of delinquent behaviours. In spite of cretin limitations of the present paper, it may prove to be a guideline for further researches conducted in this area.

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