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**Research Article** 



# Impact Of Family Dynamics On Juvenile Delinquency: A Case Study Of Observation Homes In The National Capital Region of Delhi

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#### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the demographic, familial, and socio-economic characteristics of delinquent juveniles aged 9-18 in selected observation homes across the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi, India. A total of 443 juveniles were surveyed through structured interviews and official records, with data collected on factors including gender, family background, education, and criminal history. A significant proportion (77.43%) came from nuclear families. Educational levels were generally low, particularly among parents, and 51.47% of juveniles were enrolled in school at the time of the delinquency. Criminal offenses were predominantly serious, with 41.76% apprehended for murder and 24.15% for rape. Factors such as family instability, low parental supervision, poor socio-economic conditions, and migration were linked to increased delinquent behavior. This research highlights the multifaceted causes of juvenile delinquency, emphasizing the role of familial and socio-economic vulnerabilities in shaping criminal behavior.

**Keywords:** Socioeconomic, Criminal behavior, National Capital Region, Family Background.

#### **Introduction:**

Family is an integral part of children, and when a family disintegrates, the interaction between parents and children diminishes. Family as a social structure was given importance throughout the world and called the "central unit," which is responsible for the socialization of children. Society must help a family ensure children's care and protection and work for their physical and mental well-being (General Assembly Resolution 45/112, 1990). Family dysfunction is the top cause of juveniles to indulge in antisocial activities. Lack of a father in the home due to divorce or other reasons has a significant influence on the behavior of children. Jejurikar and Shenvi (1995) investigated the various socioeconomic levels of juveniles and found that an unfavorable home environment was a prominent factor in most instances. The researcher concluded that poverty, a nuclear family pattern, and illiteracy all had a role in these children's erratic behavior. In addition, stealing was found to be the common reason boys were placed in the observation home. Comanor and Llad (2002) analyzed the juvenile delinquency incidences in a different type of family structures and their income levels. Delinquencies were reported twice in the presence of a "Mother-stepfather" as compared to a "Father-stepmother" family. This observation highlights the importance of the presence of a father in the family. However, the presence of a father in the home was found to negatively impact the child and increase delinquency despite a high-income level. In contrast, the presence of a mother has a reverse impact. Similar results were obtained in a longitudinal survey in Cambridge by Juby and Farrington (2001). They compared the disrupted families with the intact families. Disrupted families are found to have a higher delinquency rate. It has been reported that delinquency was found to be low in juveniles with loner mothers without fathers as compared to juveniles with intact families. In contrast, families with absent mothers had significantly high delinquency and family disruptions. Results also indicate that living with a mother after family disruption is more important as it helps reduce delinquency. Mothers always help children in foster care. Similar results were found in all groups of convicted, undertrials, and self-reported delinquencies.

Agarwal (2018) found that social factors such as peer pressure, poverty, low education, a habit of substance use, broken families, and dysfunctional family settings are the major factors responsible for delinquency in society. Psychological factors like psychiatric disorders, social order, neighborhood ties, etc., also play an essential role in determining juvenile delinquency.

Knaappila et al. (2019) show that delinquency was related to all three kinds of socioeconomic adversities (not living with both parents, low parental education, and parental unemployment). Delinquency was reported to be high in adolescents whose parents are less educated as compared to adolescents with higher-educated parents. It was found to be positively related to the unemployment of parents. As the number of adversities increased, an increase in delinquency was reported.

Moitra et al. (2018) looked at various parenting behaviors and their links to adolescent delinquency in low-income Indian families. Researchers who compared delinquent and non-delinquent households revealed that delinquent families had a permissive parenting style with little parental control. Juvenile delinquents lacked restraint, less harsh parental standards, and poor self-control. The outcomes of this study support the hypothesis that optimal parental participation is required for adolescents to develop into fully functional adults capable of emotional and social steering in the adult world. In addition, the study's findings revealed indications of permissive parenting in delinquent families. In delinquent families, denial of material goods, object alienation, and mutual emotional support were less common punishment strategies. Singh and Jahanara (2016) investigated the impact of socioeconomic factors on the family behind Juvenile delinquency. The researchers found that most families have low education levels, are illiterate, and have low-income levels. Most respondents belonged to Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities. The majority of the respondents were from joint families.

Most of the studies done in India are very localized and do not extensively include the influence of family on juvenile delinquency. This study examines the family background and socioeconomic conditions that have influenced the behavior of these delinquent juveniles.

# **Objectives:**

The primary objectives of the study are:

- To study the family background of apprehended delinquent juveniles (9-18 years).
- The study of the role of family background in the criminal behavior of delinquent juveniles.

#### **Database and Methodology:**

To understand the causes of juvenile delinquency in the National Capital Region of Delhi, information regarding the age, gender, occupation, income, and motivation of criminals was recorded through the primary survey. Nine observation homes located in NCR were purposively selected. The schedule method was used to collect information from delinquent juveniles. Other information regarding the type of crime and date of admission to observation homes was collected from the official records maintained by observation homes' officials. The sample size was 443 delinquent juveniles, whereas 210 were from the Delhi Sub-region, 123 were from the Uttar Pradesh sub-region, 70 were from the Haryana sub-region, and 40 were from the Rajasthan sub-region.

# **Results and Discussion:**

## **Demographic Profile of Delinquent Juveniles**

Male constitutes 94.81% of the total sampled delinquent juveniles. The age structure of delinquent juveniles shows that 33.41% of juveniles were of the age of 17. Juveniles between the ages of 16 and 17 exhibit a higher propensity for engaging in delinquent activities, which can be attributed to the substantial changes they undergo both physically and cognitively during this phase of their development. This period is characterized by emotional experiences, fluctuating moods, and increased vulnerability to engage in risky behavior. 8.13% of juveniles are age 12 and younger, and 10.16% are 18 and older. This age is a very critical phase of their life. It has implications for their physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being. Substantial changes of this period include Brain development (includes decision-making capacity, emotional regulations, impulsive control, and critical thinking), Identity formation (development of a sense of self, values, and belief), Risk-taking behavior (due to desire for independence and impulsivity), Learn socialization (through interaction with peer, family, teachers), Education and skill development (learn and acquisition of life skills), etc.

42.44% of the sampled delinquent juveniles live in rented accommodations, and 57.56% live in their own houses. 36.12% of juveniles reported to have migrated with their family. Most delinquent juveniles have reported economic opportunities as the primary reason for family migration from nearby states to the capital or cities nearby.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Delinquent Juveniles

Variables	n	%	Cum. %	
Gender		·		
Female	23	5.19	5.19	
Male	420	94.81	100	
Age Structure	·	·		
≤ 12	36	8.13	8.13	
13	13	2.93	11.06	
14	26	5.87	16.93	
15	51	11.51	28.44	
16	124	27.99	56.43	
17	148	33.41	89.84	
≥18	45	10.16	100.00	
<b>Housing Status</b>				
Own	255	57.56	57.56	
Rented	188	42.44	100	
Migrated				
No	283	63.88	63.88	
Yes	160	36.12	100	

Note. n = 443; Cum. = Cumulative Source: Calculated by Researcher; based on Primary Survey, 2023.

At the national level, from 2011 to 2023, the percentage of girls delinquent juveniles apprehended was reduced ten times. In 2022, out of the total delinquent juveniles apprehended, only 0.9 percent were girls; this percent was 9.21 in 2011 (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). This variation in behavior can be attributed to the differences in biological factors, socialization, gender roles, peer influence, coping mechanisms, and risk-taking behavior. Boys tend to exhibit externalizing behavior and a higher level of risk-taking behavior. Girls have, in contrast, exhibited delinquency in response to personal and social maladjustment. Four critical factors unique to this cohort, as identified, are dramatically onset of puberty, changing socio-cultural position in society, complex identification process, and adult authority and the resulting loneliness (Kratcoski, 1974). Both these groups have different coping mechanisms. Girls express their inner anger and conflict directly, whereas boys seek identification and express masculinity through different methods. (Barker & Adams, 1962).

Rural-to-urban migration undermines the social bonds with society and increases the exposure level of juveniles to risk factors. Migrated individuals experience weaker social bonds than native individuals (Shen & Zhong, 2018). Further researchers have reported that first-generation migrants were twice as likely to have committed crimes as compared to second-generation immigrants. This is likely due to the cultural assimilation of immigrants over time (Fernández-Pacheco Alises et al., 2022).

## **Family Background of Delinquent Juveniles**

The family is the fundamental social institution considered the 'cradle of the personality.' This can be acknowledged in its cardinal functions, including nurturing, maintenance, providing care and protection, and the pivotal role in the socialization of the children. Family as a group serves as a shield and support system for the growth and development of the child. In cases where the family is functionally incapable and inadequate to perform the necessary care and functions, it hinders the development of the child's personality (Kannan & Singh, 2021). There, we first examine the family background of delinquent juveniles under study.

#### **Type of Juvenile's Family:**

The majority of delinquent juveniles (77.43%) are from nuclear family backgrounds, and 22.57% are from joint family backgrounds. 41.31 % of juveniles have four or less than four family members, and 47.4% reported having five to seven members in their homes. Only 11.29% of juveniles reported having eight or more eight family members (Table 2). Nuclear families have limited supervision and monitoring of parents, which substantially affects the risk of juvenile delinquency. These families have limited communication with their children, and they resort to externalizing these things through different antisocial means. Further, working parents in these families potentially give less time to their children. Nuclear families face isolation and lack of support from extended family members who can provide better help in times of distress.

**Table 2: Family Status of Delinguent Juveniles** 

Category	n	%	Cum. %		
Type of Juvenile's Family					
Joint	100	22.57	22.57		
Nuclear	343	77.43	100		
No. of Family Membe	ers				
≤4	183	41.31	41.31		
5-7	210	47.4	88.71		
≥8	50	11.29	100		
Response to the ques	tion: Are both your pare	nts alive?			
No	99	22.35	22.35		
Yes	344	77.65	100		
Total	443	100			
If no, which one is deceased?					
Both	8	8.08	8.08		
Father	51	51.52	59.6		
Mother	40	40.4	100		
Total	99	100			
<b>Current Marital Status of Parents</b>					
Currently Married	302	87.79	87.79		
Separated	42	12.21	100		
Total	344	100			

*Note.* n = 443; Cum. = Cumulative

Source: Calculated by Researcher; based on Primary Survey, 2023.

The presence of parents in the family, type of family, and parenting have significant influence over the delinquency behavior of juveniles. This association between general parenting and delinquency was reported to be high among school-age children and early adolescents as compared to mid or late adolescents, thus suggesting a weakening influence of parenting on delinquent behavior (Hoeve et al., 2009).

Regarding whether both parents are alive, out of the 443 respondents, 344 (77.65%) reported having both parents alive, and 99 (22.35%) did not have both parents alive. Among the 99 respondents who do not have both parents alive, 8 (8.08%) have both parents deceased, 51 (51.52%) have only their fathers deceased, and 40 (40.4%) have only their mothers deceased (Table 2). From these statistics, one can observe the absence of parents (either father/mother or both). Family having transitioned from two-parent to single-parent were reported to have increased symptoms of depression, lower levels of school engagement, and higher levels of delinquency (Brown, 2006). Further, compared to other siblings, the parenting of father and mother are significantly different (Hoeve et al., 2009). Further, table 2 provides information about the current marital status of Juvenile's parents. Nearly 8 percent of the juveniles responded that their parents are separated or divorced and they are living with their other family members. Whereas most juveniles (92%) have reported their parent's status as currently married. The separated or divorced status of parents increases the likelihood of juveniles' engagement in delinquent acts (Barbetti, 1996). Children brought up with single parents are at higher risk of engaging in criminal activities and educational and behavioral problems (Mwangangi, 2019). Children with parental death before the age of 16 are found to be significantly associated with delinquent behavior (Draper & Hancock, 2011). Parental death of juveniles has been associated with an adverse social, educational, and negative life trajectory (Berg et al., 2019) and increased mortality across the life course (Hiyoshi et al., 2021).

# **Education Level of Delinquent Juveniles and their family members**

Education has a significant role to play in shaping the development of juveniles. It influences both the frequency and severity of criminal activities perpetrated by individuals. Parental education has a significant behavioral impact on juveniles. In a study by Barbetti (1996) shows that subjects who reported delinquency have lower parental education levels.

Table 3 Educational Status of Delinquent Juveniles and their Family Members

Variables	n	%	Cum. %
Juvenile		- 1	•
Illiterate	53	11.96	11.96
(1-5) Primary	70	15.8	27.77
(6-10) Secondary	251	56.66	84.42
(11-12) Senior Secondary	69	15.58	100
Juvenile's Father			
Illiterate	110	24.83	24.83
(1-5) Primary	55	12.42	37.25
(6-10) Secondary	151	34.09	71.33
(11-12) Senior Secondary	57	12.87	84.20
No Response	70	15.80	100
Juvenile's Mother			
Illiterate	185	41.76	41.76
(1-5) Primary	47	10.61	52.37
(6-10) Secondary	111	25.06	77.43
(11-12) Senior Secondary	28	6.32	83.75
Graduation	3	0.68	84.42
No Response	69	15.58	100

Note. n = 443; Cum. = Cumulative Source: Calculated by Researcher; based on Primary Survey, 2023.

Table 3 and Figure 1 provide the educational status of family members of delinquent juveniles. Among the delinquent juveniles under consideration, 11.96% are illiterate, and 15.8% are in primary education. Furthermore, 56.66% of juveniles are in secondary classes, and 15.58% are in senior secondary classes (Table 3).

The education of parents has a multifaceted and intricate relationship with the likelihood of a juvenile's engagement in delinquency. Parents' educational attainment is seen as a complete modulator of the family environment as it is associated with better communication with children, parental supervision, role modeling, and value transmission. Among the fathers of juveniles, 24.83% were reported to be illiterate, and 12.42% had completed only primary classes. A substantial percentage of fathers of delinquent juveniles (34.09%) had pursued studies till secondary classes, and 12.87% had pursued studies till senior secondary levels. Meanwhile, 15.80% of the juveniles do not know their father's educational attainments.

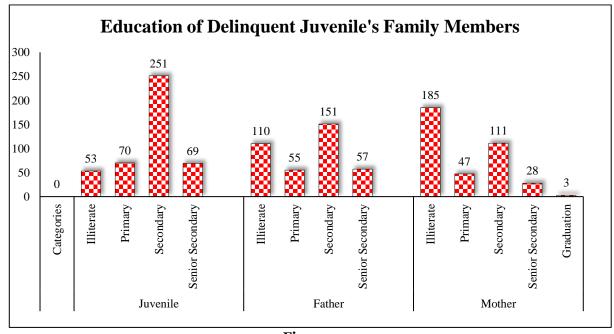


Figure 1
Source: Table 3

Further, table 3 also provides insights into the educational attainments of mothers of delinquent juveniles. Nearly 41.76% of the juvenile's mothers are illiterate, which is characterized by a lack of formal education. Maternal education significantly correlates with children's education attainment and is more likely to support child development. An educated mother can provide a more stable environment at home. 25.06% of the juvenile's mothers have completed only secondary education, and 10.61% have reached only primary levels (Table 3). A very low penetration of education among the mothers significantly reflects the juvenile's home environments.

# Occupation of Delinquent Juvenile's Family Members

Table 4 provides insights into the occupational distribution of delinquent juveniles and their parents. The majority of delinquent juveniles (51.47%) were currently studying, followed by working as casual wage laborers (28.89%), and 13.77% reported not working and studying. Moreover, nearly 4 (0.90%) juveniles did not respond to this question. Further, 49.21% of juveniles' fathers reported having worked as casual wage laborers, followed by 24.83% as self-employed, and 14.45% did not know the status of their father's occupation.

Table 4 Occupation of Family Members of Delinquent Juveniles

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Variables	n	%	Cum. %	
Juveniles			·	
Casual Wage Labourers	128	28.89	28.89	
Not Working	61	13.77	42.66	
Self Employed	22	4.97	47.63	
Study	228	51.47	99.10	
No Response	4	0.90	100	
Juvenile's Father			·	
Casual Wage Labourers	218	49.21	49.21	
Not Working	3	0.68	49.89	
Regular Salaried Employees	48	10.84	60.72	
Self Employed	110	24.83	85.55	
No Response	64	14.45	100	
Juvenile's Mother				
Casual Wage Labourers	114	25.73	25.73	
Housewife	262	59.14	84.88	
Regular Salaried Employees	4	0.90	85.78	
Self Employed	5	1.13	86.91	
No Response	58	13.09	100	

Note. n = 443; Cum. = Cumulative.
Source: Calculated by Researcher; based on Primary Survey, 2023.

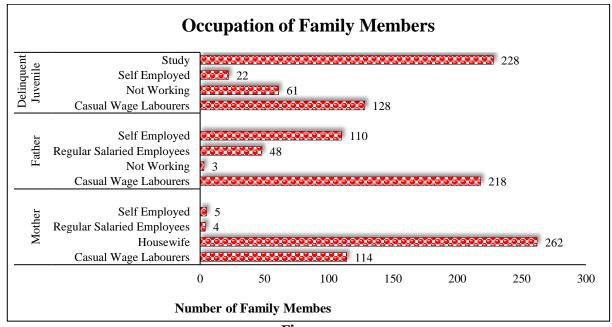


Figure 2 Source: Table 4

Further, in the case of occupation of mothers, 59.14% of juveniles reported having their mothers as housewives, and 25.73% reported working as casual laborers. 13.09% gave no response or did not know about the working status of their mother (Table 4 & Figure 2).

# Family Income and Juvenile Delinquency

Table 5 provides information regarding the distribution of family income of delinquent juveniles. 49.21% of the juveniles have a family income of less than 15 thousand. This is followed by 31.6% of juveniles with family income between 16 and 25 thousand. Moreover, 19.19% of juveniles have a family income of more than 26 thousand. These figures very well reflect that most of the delinquent juveniles were from families with poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Table 5 Income Group of Delinquent Juvenile Family Households

Income Group	Juvenile	Juvenile		
	n	%	Cum. %	
<15	218	49.21	49.21	_
16-25	140	31.6	80.81	
>26	85	19.19	100	

*Note.* n = 443; Cum. = Cumulative.

Source: Calculated by Researcher; based on Primary Survey, 2023.

Family income may influence delinquent behavior in juveniles. Due to lower incomes in the family, individuals face strain and frustration due to limited access to resources. Families with lower incomes face economic deprivations and inadequate access to basic needs such as housing, education, and healthcare. The lower average income of family members may cause them to engage in long working hours at their workplace. With higher social-economic conditions, delinquency tends to rise and vice versa (Wynn, 2004). Lower socioeconomic conditions compromise the involvement and duration of parents' involvement with children and prosocial behavior among delinquent juveniles (Rekker et al., 2015).

#### **Criminal History of Delinquent Juveniles**

Table 6: Criminal History of Delinquent Juveniles

Table 0. Criminal History of Delinquent Suvernes						
Variables	n	%	Cum. %			
Crime Heads						
Arm Act	4	0.9	0.9			
Arson/Public Disorder	12	2.71	3.61			
Murder	185	41.76	45.37			
Others	19	4.29	49.66			
Rape	107	24.15	73.81			
Robbery	25	5.64	79.46			
Theft	91	20.54	100			
Response to the question	Response to the question: Do you regret what you did?					
No	21	4.74	4.74			
Yes	422	95.26	100			
Response to the question: Does your family have a past criminal record?						
No	374	85.19	85.19			
Yes	65	14.81	100			
Were you part of a Gang?						
No	311	70.20	70.20			
Yes	132	29.80	100			
Total	443	100				

*Note.* n = 443; Cum. = Cumulative.

Source: Calculated by Researcher; based on Primary Survey, 2023.

Table 6 shows the distribution of Delinquent Juveniles along with their crimes. The highest number of juveniles was reported from the crime head of Murder (41.76%). Rape is the second largest offense among delinquent juveniles, constituting around 24.15% of the total delinquent juvenile sample. Moreover, one out of every five juveniles in the observation home was admitted because of theft cases. The most minor cases were registered under robbery (5.64%), others (4.29%), and arms act (0.9%) (Figure 3).

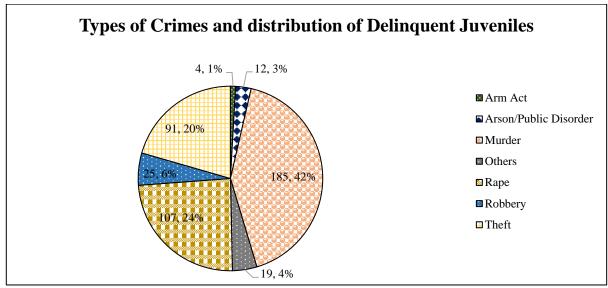


Figure 3 Source: Table 6

In response to the question, do they regret what they did? Four hundred twenty-two respondents (95.26%) answered "Yes," and 21 respondents (4.74%) said "No." Twenty-one respondents believed they had not committed any crime and, therefore, had no regret for the false charges and apprehension. It is exciting to note here that 29.80% of the delinquent juveniles were part of a gang or involved in a group with some other juveniles.

Most juveniles (85.19%) reported that their families do not have a past criminal record, whereas a smaller percentage (14.81%) indicated that their families do have such a record.

Criminality among parents is a strong predictor of juvenile delinquency. Parent-offspring criminality correlation can be because of some external common factors like poverty or dependency. Then, poverty and dependency can be reduced. However, if it is due to some model hypothesis in which children take their parents as role models, then separation of family members from children can reduce crime. If criminality among children is due to a direct transfer of criminal behavior from parents, then incarceration may be worked out (Hjalmarsson & Lindquist, 2012). Further incarceration of parents has a significant and long-lasting impact on children, breaks up families, and destabilizes the home environment. This factor has the potential to influence and increase the risk of juvenile delinquency. Many researchers have pointed out the hardships children of incarcerated parents face different hardships including mental health problems and social problems (Roberge, 2023). Offsprings of incarcerated parents have a higher likelihood of criminal conviction as compared to noncriminal parents (Hjalmarsson & Lindquist, 2012).

Intergenerational transmission of criminality from parents to offspring was visible in only one example. One of the juveniles pointed out that his father teaches him to make a living with the help of his brain and hands. He describes his father as his role model and wants to be like him. Later, he said he does not blame his father for his wrongdoings. So, with these, there is little evidence of intergenerational transmission of criminality.

#### **Conclusion:**

This study examines juvenile delinquency in Delhi's National Capital Region, focusing on socio-demographic factors, family background, and criminal behavior. Most apprehended juveniles are male, aged 16-17, from low-income nuclear families. Parental loss or separation is linked to higher delinquency rates. A strong correlation exists between low family income, poor educational attainment, and criminal behavior. Many juveniles are involved in serious crimes, with many expressing remorse. While some come from families with criminal backgrounds, evidence of intergenerational crime transmission is inconclusive. The study emphasizes the need for family support, better education, and economic interventions to reduce juvenile delinquency.

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