

Exploring the Causal Pathways of Juvenile Delinquency: Field-Based Evidence from Haryana's Place of Safety

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Abstract: *This study examines the causal pathways of juvenile delinquency in Haryana, utilising field-based evidence from the Place of Safety in Karnal. Drawing on data from 109 juveniles, the research explores socio-economic, familial, educational, neighbourhood, and digital factors contributing to delinquent behaviour. Findings reveal that most juveniles come from low-income households, have poorly educated parents, and experience irregular or negligent supervision. High school dropout rates, academic difficulties, and residence in underdeveloped or drug-prone localities further heighten vulnerability. Digital influences—including exposure to pornography, crime-oriented content, and peer-driven social media use—emerged as strong contemporary determinants. Additionally, substance use and childhood sexual abuse significantly shaped behavioural risks. Interpreted through Social Disorganisation, Social Learning, and Social Control theories, the results show that delinquency arises from cumulative structural disadvantage, weak social regulation, and psychosocial stress. The study highlights the importance of comprehensive interventions that incorporate family, school, digital literacy, and community support.*

Keywords: *Juvenile, Delinquency, Place of Safety, Media Influence, Pornography.*

Introduction:

Juvenile delinquency has become an increasingly pressing concern in contemporary Indian society as young offenders engage in offences that often reveal deep-rooted social, economic, and psychological vulnerabilities. The concept broadly refers to unlawful or socially disruptive conduct by individuals below eighteen years. Sociologists have approached this phenomenon in varied ways. According to Edwin H. Sutherland, juvenile delinquency refers to “behaviour by a young person that violates legal codes and is learned through association with delinquent peers.” Similarly, William Healy defines juvenile delinquency as “a form of socially unacceptable behaviour in children that results from complex interactions of personal traits and adverse environmental conditions.” These definitions emphasise that delinquency is not merely an individual choice but emerges from structural and relational circumstances shaping a child's development.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics indicate that although juveniles constitute a modest proportion of total offenders in India, certain categories, such as murder, assault, sexual offences, motor vehicle theft, and cyber misconduct, have shown persistent involvement by juveniles. Haryana, in particular, has witnessed serious incidents involving minors, including the *Hisar school principal murder case*, the *Rohtak family murder case*, and the *Ryan International School murder case* in

Gurugram. These cases demonstrate a disturbing shift in the nature of juvenile crime from impulsive acts to more violent, deliberate, and sometimes premeditated behaviour.

Theoretically, several sociological frameworks explain juvenile delinquency. Merton's Strain Theory argues that when socially approved goals (such as success and status) are blocked due to poverty or exclusion, youth may resort to illegitimate means, including crime. Becker's Labelling Theory suggests that once a child is labelled a "delinquent," repeated stigmatisation can push them deeper into deviant identities. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory posits that delinquent behaviour is learned through intimate contact with deviant peers, who transmit values favourable to law violation. Additionally, Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganisation Theory links delinquency to neighbourhood conditions—poverty, instability, and lack of community control, which weaken social institutions like family and school.

Under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, *Places of Safety* serve a crucial role in housing children aged 16 to 18 who are accused or convicted of heinous offences. These institutions are mandated to provide rehabilitation through counselling, education, vocational training, and structured living arrangements. Their functioning directly influences not only the behaviour of incarcerated juveniles but also their reintegration prospects.

Multiple factors contribute to juvenile delinquency in Haryana: socio-economic deprivation, family conflict, poor parental supervision, school dropout, substance abuse, and increasing exposure to violent or sexualized digital media. Field interactions across institutions reveal that many juveniles encounter violence, pornography, and peer-driven online content at an early age, shaping risky behaviours and distorted perceptions of masculinity, power, and conflict resolution.

Given the changing nature of juvenile crime, characterised by higher aggression, planned involvement, and digital influence, understanding these causal pathways is urgently needed.

Review of Literature:

Research on juvenile delinquency has developed across diverse sociological and criminological traditions, emphasising the interplay of individual behaviour, social environment, and structural conditions. Globally, Shaw and McKay's (1942) *Social Disorganization Theory* established that delinquency is concentrated in neighbourhoods marked by poverty, residential mobility, and weakened communal ties. Sutherland's (1947) *Differential Association Theory* further argued that delinquent behaviour is learned through interaction with peers who transmit definitions favourable to law violation. Contemporary global studies, such as those by Loeber and Farrington (2012), highlight how early exposure to violence, family disruption, and school failure are strong predictors of later delinquent behaviour across societies.

In the Indian context, sociological literature has underscored the importance of caste, class, and cultural environments in shaping youth behaviour. Kundu and Yadav (2016) note that structural inequalities, limited educational opportunities, and the pressures of economic deprivation contribute to juvenile delinquency. Veena Das (2007) emphasizes how experiences of social suffering, domestic instability, and community-level tensions create fragmented childhoods that may lead to conflict with the law. Empirical research by Parackal and Panicker (2014) indicates that factors such as inconsistent parenting, lack of supervision, and peer influence significantly raise the likelihood of delinquent acts among Indian adolescents.

Indian criminological studies also point to increasing exposure to media violence and digital content as emerging contributors to youth deviance. Scholars such as Kratcoski et al. (2020) suggest that films, social media, and online peer groups often normalise aggressive behaviour, increasing risk-taking and antisocial tendencies among young people. Further, research on institutionalised juveniles across India shows that many come from broken families, economically marginalised backgrounds, and school dropout histories, reinforcing the link between structural disadvantage and delinquency.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that juvenile delinquency is shaped by a complex combination of socio-economic stress, cultural influences, family instability, school detachment, peer pressure, and media exposure. However, despite

considerable national and international scholarship, a need remains for focused, field-based studies examining causal pathways among juveniles placed in custodial institutions, such as *Places of Safety*.

Statement of the Problem:

Despite rising instances of serious juvenile offences in Haryana, there remains limited empirical sociological research analysing the causes and conditions that shape juveniles' pathways into delinquency, particularly among those housed in the Place of Safety. This study aims to fill this gap by examining socio-economic, familial, peer, media-related, and institutional factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Haryana.

Objective of the study:

1. To identify the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
2. To analyse the causes responsible for children becoming delinquents.

Methodology:

This study adopts an exploratory research design to understand the causal pathways of juvenile delinquency among children residing in a custodial setting. The research was conducted in the *Place of Safety, Karnal*, a Child Care Institution established under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The institution housed 219 juveniles during the period of fieldwork, out of which a purposive sample of 109 respondents was selected. The purposive and convenience sampling method was used primarily due to institutional constraints, availability of respondents, and the nature of the offences, which required careful coordination with institutional authorities.

Data were collected using a structured interview schedule, supplemented by narrative accounts and non-participant observation. Face-to-face interviews were conducted within the institution, ensuring a private and supportive environment. Observational notes were also maintained to capture behavioural cues, institutional routines, and contextual dynamics that could not be obtained through direct questioning.

Ethical consideration:

Formal permission for data collection was granted by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Haryana, which administers the institution. Ethical considerations—such as voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and avoidance of psychological harm—were strictly adhered to throughout the field survey. Special care was taken to ensure sensitivity, given the respondents' legal vulnerability and custodial status.

Tables 1: Caste wise distribution of respondents

Caste Category	Frequency	Percentage
General	35	32.5
OBC	34	31.4
SC	39	35.4
ST	1	0.7
Total	109	100.0

Table 1 presents the caste-wise distribution of respondents. The data highlight a significant sociological pattern in the profile of children in conflict with the law, based on a sample of 109 juveniles. The data show that Scheduled Caste (SC) juveniles form the largest proportion (35.4%) of the sample, followed by those belonging to the General category (32.5%) and Other Backward Classes (31.4%). A very small representation from the **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** category (0.7%) is observed.

Table 2: Religion Status of Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	88	80.7
Muslim	17	15.6
Charitarians	1	0.9

Sikh	3	2.8
Total	109	100.0

Table 2 shows the religious status of the respondents. The data shows that the majority belong to the Hindu community (80.7%), followed by a smaller proportion of Muslim juveniles (15.6%). Very limited representation is observed from Charitarians (0.9%) and Sikh respondents (2.8%). This pattern broadly reflects the demographic composition of Haryana, where Hindus constitute the overwhelming majority. The distribution suggests that juvenile delinquency is not concentrated within any particular religious group but is influenced by wider socio-economic and familial factors cutting across religious boundaries. The presence of juveniles from multiple faiths reinforces that delinquent behaviour emerges from broader structural and environmental conditions rather than religious identity alone.

Table 3: Type of Residence of Respondents

Residence Type	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	53	48.6
Urban	41	37.6
Semi-Urban	15	13.8
Total	109	100.0

The residence-wise distribution of the 109 juveniles shows that almost half (48.6%) belong to rural areas, followed by a substantial proportion from urban settings (37.6%). A smaller segment comes from semi-urban localities (13.8%). This pattern highlights that juvenile delinquency emerges across different residential backgrounds, though rural and urban areas account for the majority of cases. Rural juveniles may experience limited institutional support and exposure to economic hardship, while urban juveniles often face peer influences, overcrowded neighbourhoods, and media exposure. Overall, the distribution suggests that residential context shapes risk factors, but delinquency is not confined to any single area type.

Table 4: Educational Status of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	7	6.6
Up to Primary	21	19.0
Middle	35	32.5
Secondary	30	27.5
Sr. Secondary	14	12.8
Other	2	1.6
Total	109	100.0

The education-wise distribution of the 109 juvenile respondents indicates that a significant proportion had discontinued their studies at the middle (32.5%) and secondary levels (27.5%), suggesting academic instability and weak school attachment. A smaller segment had completed primary schooling (19%), while illiteracy (6.6%) and other forms of education (1.6%) remain limited. The data show that most juveniles were either academically weak or faced irregular schooling patterns, which may increase vulnerability to peer pressure, risky environments, and deviant behaviours. Overall, the pattern highlights the crucial link between disrupted education and juvenile delinquency, emphasising the need for strong school-based interventions.

Table 5: Family type of the respondents

Family Type	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear	49	45.3
Joint	48	44.2
Extended	12	10.5
Total	109	100.0

The family-type distribution of 109 juvenile respondents indicates that most belong to nuclear (45.3%) and joint families (44.2%), reflecting the dominant family structures in Haryana. A smaller proportion comes from extended families (10.5%). The near-equal representation of nuclear and joint families suggests that juvenile delinquency is not confined to any single-family structure. However, nuclear families may experience limited supervision due to work-related pressures, while joint

families may struggle with intergenerational conflicts or inconsistent monitoring. Overall, the data indicate that family environment, rather than family type alone—plays a crucial role in shaping juveniles’ behavioural outcomes.

Table 6: Monthly Household income of respondents

Monthly Income (₹)	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 10,000	12	11.0
10,001–20,000	51	46.8
20,001–30,000	33	30.0
Above 30,000	13	12.2
Total	109	100.0

The income-wise distribution of the 109 juveniles shows that the largest share comes from families earning ₹10,001–20,000 per month (46.8%), indicating households with lower-middle to economically constrained incomes. A considerable proportion belongs to families with incomes between ₹20,001 and ₹ 30,000 (30%), while only 12.2% represent relatively better-off households earning above ₹30,000. The lowest-income group (up to ₹10,000) accounts for 11% of respondents. Overall, the table suggests that juvenile delinquency is more prevalent among economically vulnerable families whose limited resources, financial stress, and restricted access to educational or supportive environments may heighten children’s exposure to risky behaviours and deviant influences.

Table 7: Occupational Status of Respondents’ Father

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Agricultural Labour	20	18.3
Labour (General)	23	21.1
Government Employee	4	3.7
Self-Business	17	15.6
Private Job	19	17.4
Not Working	4	3.7
No More (Deceased)	22	20.2
Total	109	100.0

The occupation-wise distribution of the 109 juveniles shows that most families belong to economically vulnerable occupational groups. A significant proportion comes from agricultural labour (18.3%) and general labour households (21.1%), indicating financial instability and irregular income patterns. Parents engaged in self-employment (15.6%) and private jobs (17.4%) represent lower-middle-income segments, while only a small share are government employees (3.7%). Notably, in 20.2% of cases, the primary earner was reported as deceased, which may intensify socio-economic stress. Overall, the data suggest that occupational insecurities and economic hardships create environments that can increase juveniles’ vulnerability to delinquent behaviour.

Table 8: Educational Level of Respondents’ Father

Father’s Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	47	43.1
Up to Primary	10	9.5
Middle	17	15.6
Secondary	15	13.8
Sr. Secondary	8	7.3
Above Sr. Secondary / Others	7	6.4
Don’t Know	5	4.3
Total	109	100.0

Table 8 presents the educational profile of fathers of the 109 juveniles, showing that a large proportion are illiterate (43.1%), indicating limited parental educational capital within many households. A smaller share has completed primary (9.5%), middle (15.6%), or secondary education (13.8%), while only a few have reached the senior secondary level (7.3%) or higher (6.4%). The “don’t know” responses (4.3%) reflect weak communication or absent father figures. Overall, the distribution reveals that most juveniles come from families where fathers have low formal education, which may impact

guidance, supervision, and educational support—factors commonly associated with increased vulnerability to delinquent behaviour.

Table 9: Educational Level of Respondents' Mothers

Mother's Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	63	57.8
Up to Primary	18	16.5
Middle	11	10.1
Secondary	8	7.3
Sr. Secondary	3	2.8
Above Sr. Secondary / Others	4	3.7
Don't Know	2	1.8
Total	109	100.0

Table 9 illustrates the educational profile of the respondents' mothers. The data reveal a significant concentration of low educational attainment. A majority are illiterate (57.8%), while only small proportions have studied up to the primary (16.5%), middle (10.1%), or secondary level (7.3%). Very few have completed senior secondary or higher education. This trend reflects limited educational opportunities available to women in many socio-economically disadvantaged households. Research consistently shows that maternal education strongly influences children's supervision, moral guidance, and academic support, and low maternal literacy is associated with higher vulnerability to negative peer influences and risky behaviours. This pattern underscores maternal education as an important structural factor in juvenile delinquency.

Table 10: Criminal Background of the Respondents' Father

Family Criminal Background	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	24	22.0
No	85	78.0
Total	109	100.0

The distribution of family criminal background among the 109 juveniles shows that 22% reported having a family member with prior involvement in crime, while 78% belonged to families with no such history. Although the majority come from non-criminal families, the presence of a notable minority with criminal backgrounds reflects the intergenerational transmission of deviance, a pattern supported by studies in criminology. Research by Sampson and Laub (1993) suggests that exposure to deviant family behaviour may weaken social controls and normalise delinquent actions. However, the predominance of respondents without such backgrounds indicates that environmental and situational factors also play major roles in juvenile offending.

Table 11: Deviance Habits of Respondents Parents

Deviance Habit	Frequency (Responses)	Percentage
Smoking	81	33.2
Drinking	75	30.7
Gambling	39	16.0
Criminality	5	2.0
Extra-marital Affair	0	0.2
Substance (Drugs)	16	6.6
NA	28	11.5
Total Responses	244	100.0

Note: Percentages are based on Multiple responses

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The multiple-response data on parental deviant habits (N = 109) show that smoking (33.2%) and drinking (30.7%) are the most frequently reported behaviours, indicating high exposure to substance-oriented environments. Gambling is also notable (16%), while serious behaviours such as criminality (2%) and drug use (6.6%) appear less frequent but still relevant. The presence of these habits suggests that many juveniles grow up in environments where deviant behaviours are normalised,

consistent with social learning theory, which argues that children often imitate behaviours observed in the family. These findings highlight the influential role of family environment in shaping early attitudes and behavioural risks among juveniles.

Table 12: Type of quarrel seen or faced by the respondents in the Family

Type of Quarrel	Frequency	Percentage
Physical	8	7.3
Vocal	27	24.8
Both	16	14.7
NA	58	53.2
Total	109	100.0

The distribution of family quarrel types among the juveniles shows that more than half (53.2%) reported no identifiable conflicts or were unsure about quarrels at home. Among those reporting conflicts, vocal quarrels (24.8%) were the most common, followed by both physical and verbal conflicts (14.7%), while physical quarrels alone accounted for a relatively lower proportion (7.3%). These findings suggest that although overt violence is less frequent, a considerable proportion of juveniles grow up in emotionally tense or conflict-prone environments, which can affect their behavioural development. Studies indicate that persistent family conflict, especially verbal aggression, contributes to emotional insecurity and increases vulnerability to delinquent behaviour.

Table 13: Parental Supervision and Control on Respondents

Category of Parental Supervision	Frequency	Percentage
Strict / Regular Supervision	12	11.0
Moderate Supervision	27	24.8
Negligent / Irregular Supervision	47	43.1
No Supervision (Parental Absence / Broken Family)	23	21.1
Total	109	100.0

The data in Table 13 reveal that a significant segment of juveniles (43.1%) experienced negligent or irregular supervision, underscoring weak parental monitoring as a major vulnerability factor. Another 21.1% reported no supervision due to parental absence, separation, or broken families, indicating structural instability within the household. Only a small proportion experienced strict or regular supervision (11%), while moderate supervision was reported by 24.8%. These findings align with Hirschi's social control theory, which argues that weak parental bonding and monitoring increase the likelihood of delinquent behaviour. The data underline that inconsistent or absent parental supervision is a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency.

Table 14: School Performance of Respondents

Category of School Performance	Frequency	Percentage
Regular and Performing Well	13	11.9
Irregular Attendance	27	24.8
Poor Performance / Repeated Failures	20	18.3
School Dropout (Left before completion)	42	38.5
Never Enrolled / Illiterate	7	6.4
Total	109	100.0

The data in Table 14, which presents the school-performance pattern of juveniles, reveal that school dropout is the most prominent issue (38.5%), indicating a serious discontinuity in educational engagement. A considerable proportion also reported irregular attendance (24.8%) and poor academic performance (18.3%), which reinforces the notion that weak school attachment is a major risk factor. Only a small segment (11.9%) was regular and performing well, while 6.4% had never been enrolled. These findings align with Hirschi's (1969) social control theory, which emphasises that weak academic commitment increases vulnerability to deviant behaviour. Overall, disrupted schooling and academic difficulties emerge as significant contributors to juvenile delinquency.

Table 15: Type of locality of the respondents

Type of Locality	Frequency (Responses)	Percentage
Underdeveloped Area	28	25.2
Availability of Drugs in the Area	19	17.2
Criminal Area	8	7.3
Developing Area	47	43.1
Good Area	20	18.6
High Society	5	4.6
Others	3	2.8
Total Responses	130	100.00*

Note: * (Total responses exceed 109 because respondents selected more than one option.)

Table 15 shows the type of locality of the respondents. The data reveal that most juveniles come from developing localities (43.1%) and underdeveloped areas (25.2%), indicating exposure to transitional or resource-poor neighbourhoods. A considerable proportion also reported living in areas with the availability of drugs (17.2%) or criminal activity (7.3%), suggesting the presence of criminogenic environments. Only a smaller share belonged to good areas (18.6%) or high-society localities (4.6%). Research by Shaw and McKay (1969) and Sampson (1993) highlights that neighbourhood disadvantage, social disorganisation, and easy access to drugs significantly increase the risk of juvenile delinquency. The locality pattern highlights the impact of the community environment on youth behaviour.

Table 16: Substance Use by Respondents

Substance/Alcohol Use	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	74	67.9
No	35	32.1
Total	109	100.0

The data in Table 16 indicate that 67.9% of juvenile respondents reported using alcohol or other substances, highlighting a significant level of exposure to addictive behaviours. Only 32.1% reported no use. The high prevalence of substance use is consistent with research showing that early experimentation with alcohol or drugs often correlates with peer influence, weak parental supervision, and high-risk neighbourhood environments. Studies in juvenile delinquency suggest that substance use not only increases impulsivity and aggression but also lowers academic engagement and heightens vulnerability to criminal behaviour. Overall, the findings underscore substance use as a major risk factor contributing to juvenile offending.

Table 17: Integrated Distribution of Pornographic Exposure, Age of Onset, and Access Channels Among Juvenile Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Exposure to Pornographic Content	Yes	48	44.0
	No	61	56.0
Age at First Exposure	Up to 10 years	0	0.0
	11–13 years	10	9.2
	14–16 years	36	33.0
	Above 17 years	2	1.8
	NA	61	56.0
Sources of Pornography	Search Engine	14	12.8
	Social media	11	10.1
	Downloaded / Sharing	23	21.1
	NA	61	56.0
Total Respondents	—	109	100.0

The combined pornography-related findings from the sample of 109 juveniles provide significant insights into the digital and behavioural vulnerabilities of children in conflict with the law. The data indicate that 44 per cent of respondents had viewed pornographic material prior to their admission to institutional care. This substantial proportion highlights the growing accessibility of explicit online content and the lack of digital oversight within households. Such early exposure aligns with global research showing that adolescents today encounter sexualized content earlier than previous generations due to growing smartphone penetration and unsupervised internet use (Brown & L'Engle, 2009).

The age distribution highlights that the most common period of first exposure falls between 14 and 16 years of age (33%). This stage corresponds to early and mid-adolescence, a developmental phase characterised by curiosity, identity exploration, and heightened peer influence. A smaller proportion (9.2 per cent) encountered pornography between 11 and 13 years, a pattern consistent with findings that early adolescence is a sensitive stage for experimenting with digital media (Owens et al., 2012). Over half of the respondents (56 per cent) did not specify their age, which is common in research involving sensitive sexual behaviour, where hesitation and incomplete recall are frequently observed (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016).

The analysis of sources reveals that peer-driven sharing practices, through downloaded or transferred files (21.1 per cent)-constitute the most common mode of accessing explicit content. This indicates that pornography is not only an online phenomenon but also a socially transmitted form of media among juveniles, often exchanged informally within peer groups. Search engines (12.8 per cent) and social media platforms (10.1 per cent) are additional channels, reflecting the role of digital platforms in shaping juvenile sexual exposure. The findings support Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals, especially adolescents, learn behaviours through observation and imitation, particularly when reinforced by peer networks.

Collectively, these patterns underscore pornography exposure as an important psychosocial factor contributing to behavioural risks among juvenile delinquents. Research indicates that early exposure to explicit sexual content can lead to distorted perceptions of relationships, increased impulsivity, risk-taking behaviours, and premature sexual involvement (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). When combined with fragile family supervision, conflict-prone households, and lack of school engagement, as reflected in other sections of this study, the likelihood of delinquent trajectories increases substantially.

The data demonstrate that pornography exposure among juveniles is shaped by a constellation of factors, including developmental vulnerability, peer influence, digital accessibility, and weak parental control. These findings highlight the urgent need for stronger digital literacy programs, parental guidance mechanisms, and institutional awareness campaigns to safeguard adolescents from harmful online environments and reduce their susceptibility to delinquent behaviour.

Table 18: Victim of Sexual Abuse in Childhood

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	20.2
No	87	79.8
Total	109	100.0

The recalculated figures indicate that 20.2% of the juveniles experienced some form of sexual abuse during childhood, while a large majority (**79.8%**) reported no such experiences. The presence of childhood sexual abuse among one-fifth of the respondents is notable, as early victimisation is widely documented as a significant risk factor associated with emotional trauma, behavioural instability, and later delinquent tendencies. Studies show that children exposed to sexual abuse may develop psychological distress, mistrust, aggression, or maladaptive coping behaviours (Widom, 1992). The findings underline that early-life victimisation plays a meaningful role in shaping vulnerability, potentially influencing pathways into juvenile delinquency.

Table 19: Pattern of Leisure Activity among respondents before the commission of the offence

Leisure Activity	Frequency (Responses)	Percentage
Television (Movies, Music)	73	14.7
Mobile (Movies, Music)	102	20.5
Indoor Games	25	5.0
Outdoor Games	37	7.4
Mobile Games	79	15.9
Social Media (Scrolling)	81	16.3
Parties with Friends	19	3.8
Time Pass with Friends	29	5.8
Any Other Activity	47	9.5
NA (No Response/Only Work)	5	1.0

Total Responses	497	100.0
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Note: Percentages are based on Multiple responses

N-109

Table 19 shows the pattern of leisure activities prior to entering institutional care. The data reveals that Activities involving mobile entertainment, such as watching movies or listening to music (20.5%) and mobile gaming (15.9%), appear most prominent, indicating the central role of smartphones in adolescents' daily routines. Social media scrolling (16.3%) further highlights the unrestricted nature of digital engagement. Traditional options, such as outdoor games (7.4%) and indoor games (5%), were comparatively lower, suggesting a shift toward digital leisure. Frequent association with friends, through parties or time passed, also indicates strong peer-based recreation. Overall, the pattern demonstrates that digitally oriented and peer-driven leisure activities form the core of past recreational behaviour among juvenile respondents.

Table 20: The purpose of watching media by Juvenile delinquents

Purpose	Frequency (Responses)	Percentage (%)
Crime / Action Curiosity	80	52.6
Entertainment / Songs	60	39.5
Learning / Motivation	12	7.9
Total Responses	152	100.0

Note: Percentages are based on Multiple responses

N-109

The data show that curiosity toward crime and action content (52.6%) is the most dominant purpose behind juveniles' media use. This highlights a strong attraction to sensational, violent, and thrill-oriented digital content, which may influence risk-taking behaviour and fascination with unlawful activities. Entertainment purposes (39.5%), such as listening to songs and watching movies, form the second major category, reflecting recreational digital consumption. Learning or motivational content (7.9%) remains minimal, indicating limited utilisation of digital media for constructive or educational purposes. Overall, the pattern suggests that media exposure among juveniles is heavily skewed toward high-risk and non-educational content, potentially shaping behavioural attitudes and delinquent tendencies.

Discussion:

The findings reflect patterns observed in classical and contemporary criminological theories. The structural disadvantage perspective (Shaw & McKay, 1969) explains how underdeveloped neighbourhoods with weak social organisation, drug availability, and informal social norms fail to regulate youth behaviour. In this study, juveniles living in such localities were more exposed to delinquent peers and risky environments.

The marked dropout rate and academic disengagement are consistent with Hirschi's (1969) Social Control Theory, which argues that weak attachment to school and lack of commitment to conventional goals increase the likelihood of delinquency. Poor parental education and low monitoring further reduce the transmission of prosocial norms.

The influence of family dynamics, particularly the presence of deviant parental behaviour, inter-parental conflicts, and irregular supervision, aligns with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, suggesting that juveniles often learn and replicate behaviours modelled within their immediate environment. Parents' smoking, drinking, or gambling creates normative acceptance of deviance, while broken families weaken emotional bonds.

Media-related findings show that exposure to crime/action content, pornography, and excessive digital engagement increases fascination with violence, impulsivity, and risk-taking, supporting research by Brown and L'Engle (2009) and recent studies on digital criminogenic factors in adolescents. Peer sharing of explicit content highlights unsupervised technological access, reinforcing international concerns about the digital environment as an emerging driver of youth deviance.

Childhood sexual abuse among respondents (20%) shows the long-term effect of trauma on behavioural dysregulation, consistent with Widom's (1992) "cycle of violence" framework, where early victimization increases the risk of later offending.

Overall, the combined findings underscore that juvenile delinquency is not caused by a single factor but by accumulated disadvantages across personal, familial, community, and digital domains.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that juvenile delinquency in Haryana is shaped by a complex set of socio-economic, family, educational, and digital-environment factors. Empirical results strongly indicate that juveniles often come from economically fragile households, experience poor schooling, and lack effective parental supervision. Exposure to conflict-prone families, substance use, and deviant parental behaviour further reinforces behavioural vulnerability.

Digital exposure, especially to crime-based content, pornography, and social media, emerges as a powerful modern determinant shaping attitudes, curiosity, and impulsivity among adolescents. Living in underdeveloped or drug-prone localities also increases contact with delinquent peers and criminal networks. Childhood sexual abuse, though reported by a smaller proportion, remains a significant trauma-related pathway toward risky behaviour.

The findings emphasise the need for comprehensive intervention strategies:

1. Strengthening family-based supervision through parental counselling.
2. Improving school retention and remedial support.
3. Regulating digital access through awareness and digital literacy programs.
4. Strengthening community-based youth activities to reduce risky leisure patterns.
5. Policy-level attention to structural inequalities affecting SC/OBC and low-income groups.

In conclusion, juvenile delinquency is deeply rooted in structural marginality, emotional vulnerabilities, and digital-age influences. Effective prevention requires multi-sector collaboration involving families, schools, digital platforms, and community institutions to promote resilience and reduce risk among vulnerable youth.

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