

# Problem Behaviour and Academic Grade Level Performance of Adjudicated Children with Juvenile Delinquency

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This paper attempted to profile the contemporary grade level academic performance as well as the frequency, spread and intensity of problem behaviour in relation to a few associated variables, of children adjudged as juvenile delinquents in India.

**Method:** A cross-sectional exploratory survey design was employed, with randomised convenience sampling of 66 inmates, between 9 and 18 years of age, from two representative Observation Homes. To ascertain their current grade levels, a criterion referenced 'Grade Level Assessment Protocol' was prepared exclusively for this study. Another standardised 'Behaviour Assessment Scale for Indian Children with Mental Retardation, Part B' was used to profile their problem behaviour.

**Results:** The contemporary academic performance results satisfy the conventional two-grade discrepancy criteria, usually postulated for identifying children with learning disabilities. Among the associated variables examined in this study, inmates who were booked under sections of the Indian Penal Code showed significantly greater academic grade discrepancy compared to the other children. Similarly, poorer academic performance, greater grade discrepancy, as well as higher frequency, spread and intensity of reported problem behaviour were found among children from intact family backgrounds, where parents were illiterates or educated below primary school level, and more among boys than girls, and among those in the 10-12 year age group.

**Conclusions:** While these are tentative findings, they call attention to the need for extensive research on the possible links between academic performance, under achievement and learning disabilities, and juvenile delinquency in this country.

**Key words:** challenging behaviour, learning disability, juvenile offender

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## INTRODUCTION

The onset of learning disability typically begins with the preschool child who reveals expressive speech delays, despite average to above average general intelligence. During the primary school years, if the child is made to climb the academic ladder, one grade after the other, in spite of the growing gap in his/home and school environments, it can lead to disturbances in conduct and/or even delinquency (Bender, 1987; Brier, 1989; Mears & Aron, 2003; Venkatesan, 2006).

Berman (1974) reported that more than 50 % of juvenile offenders showed signs of early learning disabilities. Larson (1988) stated that youth with learning disabilities were adjudicated about twice as often as those without disabilities, and that delinquents with learning disabilities had a greater likelihood of recidivism and parole failure. Keilitz and Dunivant (1986) reported that youth with learning disabilities who had not been adjudicated were also more involved in delinquent acts than their peers who had no disabilities. Maughan et al (1985) found that 67% of their sample of adolescents with learning disabilities had records of juvenile delinquency. While observers agree that many children involved in juvenile delinquency cases have troubled schooling and academic problems (Unger, 1978; McKay & Brumback, 1980; Broder & Dunivant, 1981; Perlmutter, 1987; Waldie & Spreen, 1993), the issue of a link between learning disability and juvenile delinquency is far from being resolved (Broder et al, 1981; Larson, 1988; Crawford, 1996 ). In the available literature on learning disability and its connection with juvenile delinquency, there are no comparative studies on the prevalence of learning disability in adjudicated delinquent and officially non-delinquent populations (Podboy & Mallory, 1978; Rich et al, 1988). Also, there are problems related to definitions, diagnosis, analytical methods and reliable measures on or about learning disability itself as used across the studies (Malmgrem et al, 1999).

Research on juvenile delinquency in India is undergoing changes, similar to the transformations in the field that are happening all over the world (Chatterjee & Gutierrez, 1978; Deol, 1990). As per the Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act (2000), the incidence and rate of juvenile delinquency per hundred thousand population in the country is reported as 1.1 numbering 9,160 in 1995, 0.9 numbering 8,888 in 1999, and 2.0 numbering 23,926 in 2009. Of the total number apprehended, 3.4 % were children between 7-12 years, 31.9 % were children between 12-16 years, and 64.7 % were children between 16-18 years (National

Crime Records, 2010). It would appear that the relative and absolute numbers of these affected children are on the rise. Research into the psychological aspects of juvenile delinquency in the country has so far focussed in isolation on temperamental-personality aspects, psycho-social correlates and on behaviour problems (Shanmugam, 1948; Badami, 1962; Jayashankarappa & Rao, 1971).

The prevalence of learning disability in the general population is estimated at between 7-10 % (Lerner, 2000; Goldstein & Schwebach, 2009), which quadruples among juvenile delinquents to 50 -75% (Podboy & Mallory, 1978; Morgan, 1979; Murphy, 1986; Quinn et al, 2005). The greater representation of children with learning disability in the population of juvenile delinquents does not necessarily make it a causal factor. Nonetheless, it would be useful to explore the academic status of adjudicated juvenile delinquents by outlining their contemporary grade level performance vis-à-vis their problem behaviour, as the first step towards more detailed studies relevant to the Indian context.

Against this background, a few pertinent research questions arise: What could be the academic grade levels of children adjudicated as juvenile delinquents and committed to Observation Homes? What might be the profile of problem behaviour in such children? Could their current profile of academic performance and spread, intensity and frequency of problem behaviour have any relationship with personal variables like age, gender, and socio-economic status, nature of crime, parent or family backgrounds? To answer these questions, it is the aim of this study to profile the contemporary grade level academic performance as well as the frequency, spread and intensity of problem behaviour in a group of children officially adjudicated/committed as inmates of Juvenile Homes, and in relation to associated variables like age, gender, socioeconomic status, nature of crime, parent or family backgrounds.

## **METHOD**

This study used cross-sectional exploratory survey design with randomised convenience sampling of 66 inmates, between 9-18 years of age, from two representative Observation Homes.

### **Operational Definitions**

Neither the concept of 'learning disability' nor the concept of 'juvenile delinquency'

has operational definitions of widespread acceptability. For the purpose of this study, these terms are defined as follows:

### **Learning Disability:**

'Learning disability' is diagnosed by several yardsticks and based on different paradigms. Ideally, the diagnosis is based on the criteria of a child showing specified degrees of discrepancy by more than two grades in reading, writing, spelling and/or arithmetic, despite average to superior general and social intelligence as assessed on standardised tests of intelligence and achievement. This discrepancy should not be due to insufficient school exposure, inadequate sensory and bodily health, or because the student is a first generation learner, or has suffered any social and emotional abuse, insult, neglect, disadvantage, poor teaching, frequent change of school, curriculum or medium of instruction, bad home environment or faulty school policies which can explain the poor academic level (Venkatesan, 2010a; 2010b).

### **Juvenile Delinquency:**

The term 'juvenile delinquency' (juvenile offending or youth crime) is defined herein on the basis of a legal rather than behavioural criteria as 'participation in illegal behaviour by minors, juveniles or individuals younger than the statutory age of majority as prescribed by the respective state' (Siegel & Welsh, 2011), which is designated as 18 years in India, and as per provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (2000) of India. The nature and type of juvenile offenses could vary from status offenses (underage smoking, begging, truancy, vagrancy, obscenity, elopement, loitering, drinking, or gambling), property crimes (theft, pilferage, burglary, robbery and dacoity), cyber crimes (hacking or visiting pornography sites) and violent crimes (hurt, assault, molestation, murder, kidnap or abduction). Sometimes distinction is also made between juvenile crimes under 'Indian Penal Code', 'Criminal Procedure Code' and 'Special and Local Laws'. Some definitions which are adopted in this study are based on identifiable areas of access to the juvenile justice system, such as a police station or adjudication by a juvenile court and commitment to an Observation Home.

### **Problem Behaviour:**

The definition of 'problem behaviour' is the same as the one proposed by the authors (Peshawaria & Venkatesan, 1992) of the tool, Behaviour Assessment

Scale for Indian Children with Mental Retardation, Part B, which is used in this study. It refers to any or all observable and measurable actions of individuals which are negative, maladaptive, undesirable or problematic for the individual or to others. It can be a potential source of harm to oneself or to others. It is age inappropriate, socially deviant, causes great strain to caregivers, and interferes in teaching/learning new skills/behaviour or in the performance of already learned old skills/ behaviour in a child (Venkatesan, 2004).

## Study Sample

The study sample comprised 66 children adjudicated as juvenile delinquents, between 9-18 years of age, from juvenile Observation Homes in Bangalore and Mysore cities in southern India. Although the delinquent universe starts from the age of 7 and ends at 18, at the time of this study there were no children below 9 years of age. Based on proximity and owing to constraints of time, recruitment of the study sample was restricted to only 2 institutions, even though there were 8 Observation Homes functioning under the Department of Women and Child Development, of the state Government of Karnataka. These institutions are intended as temporary reception centres, usually for a period less than 4 months, for juveniles in conflict with law under the purview of the Indian Penal Code, pending any inquiry against them. The sample included 37 boys and 29 girls, with educational qualifications ranging from illiterate/no schooling or schooling up to class 10 with Kannada (local) language as the medium of instruction. The children were from both rural and urban settings, low or medium socio-economic backgrounds, as well as from intact, 'single' parent or 'broken' homes, and sometimes without any family background. Their socio-economic status was determined on the basis of the revised NIMH SES Scale (Venkatesan, 2009).

The Observation or Juvenile Homes were generally headed by a 'superintendent', who doubled up as an observation officer. Other personnel included 2 deputy observation officers, a second division clerk, a matron, 3 guards, a peon, a cook and a sweeper. A nurse and a medical doctor visited the Observation Home twice a week. Part-time vocational instructors specialised in tailoring, electric wiring, handicrafts, music, drama or art, and counsellors from voluntary organisations also made periodic visits. The typical daily routine of the Homes began with self-care ablutions and domestic work, followed by meditation and yoga practice, lessons on functional literacy, vocational training, and television and sports

time. This was interspersed with servings of regimented but nutritious food at breakfast, lunch, tea and supper time. Outings were also part of the routine at the weekend and on holidays. Some children were sent to a nearby school, with expenses for books and uniforms met by government funds.

## Tools

The following 3 tools were used in this study: (a) Demographic Data Sheet; (b) Grade Level Assessment Protocol (Kannada); and, (c) Behaviour Assessment Scale for Indian Children with Mental Retardation, Part B.

The 'Demographic Data Sheet' was intended to elicit personal-background details of respondents. A section of this tool was devoted to ascertain the general health, body and/or sensory status of the children, their family backgrounds, and details about parents, previous schooling, any change of school, or such issues as could explain their academic status. The 'Grade Level Assessment Protocol' (Kannada) is a criterion referenced device developed exclusively for the purpose of this study. It comprised representative samples of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic-related test items drawn directly from text books and curriculum of respective grade levels as prescribed for state government schools. A child, who gave more than 50% correct answers for a particular grade in terms of the samples of the test items drawn from that grade, was deemed to have completed or passed that grade. The protocol covered curriculum content from preschool to grade 6 levels.

The 'Behaviour Assessment Scale for Indian Children with Mental Retardation, Part B' (Peshawaria & Venkatesan, 1992), developed and standardised on a clinical population, carries a comprehensive listing of 75 types of problem behaviour spread across 9 domains commonly encountered in all children. Each item is behaviourally worded in observable and measurable terms. Users of this device need to observe the child or interview significant caregivers to rate whether each listed problem behaviour is 'absent' (Score: 0), 'present occasionally' (Score: 1) or 'present frequently' (Score: 2) for a given child. Scores are given as indicated under parenthesis. The maximum score possible for any given child on this scale is 150 and the minimum is zero. The scale has been shown to have test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.68 (Peshawaria et al, 1990). The construct validity was established by measuring significant differences between the mean scores at pre- and post- test levels, which was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Its face validity obtained from teacher ratings is reported to be high.

A pilot study field tested these tools on a sample of 15 cases, before they were used on a fresh sample in the final study.

## Procedure

Data collection involved the observation and testing of each child, to ascertain his/her grade level performance against the yardstick of grade level test performance. When a child failed to perform on all the test items of a given grade, tests of the next higher grade level were not administered. The information on problem behaviour was elicited through interviews with significant caregivers of the children. Recording of observed reactions was carried out with prior permission, informed consent and open knowledge of the respondents, by respecting the ethical issues and guidelines as enshrined in official documents for such practices (Venkatesan, 2009).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented and discussed sequentially under two distinct but related headings: (a) profile on contemporary status of grade level academic performance and discrepancies (Table 1); and (b) frequency, spread and intensity of problem behaviour (Table 2) among the study sample of children officially adjudicated/committed as inmates of Juvenile Homes, as well as in relation to associated variables like age, gender, socioeconomic status, nature of crime, parent or family backgrounds.

### Academic Performance:

**Table 1: Distribution of Actual and Assessed Grade Levels for Children in relation to various variables**

Variable	N	NCC	Actual Grade		Assessed Grade		Discrepancy		Probability
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Overall	66	56	5.59	2.69	3.51	3.02	2.07	3.49	
<b>Gender</b>									
Boys	37	54	5.37	2.82	2.91	3.19	1.97	2.27	F: 0.572 p: 0.45
Girls	29	2	5.86	2.54	4.27	2.67	1.58	1.76	
<b>Age (in years)</b>									
10-12	10	10	4.60	1.17	3.57	1.81	1.10	1.85	F: 1.494 p: 0.23

13-15	37	19	5.58	2.43	4.58	2.54	1.11	1.88	
16+	19	27	6.42	3.32	5.25	2.87	2.05	2.32	
<b>Education</b>									
Primary	22	22	2.75	0.96	0.85	1.13	1.85	1.25	F: 0.447 p: 0.64
Secondary	28	24	6.12	0.88	3.96	2.15	2.11	1.82	
High	16	10	9.06	0.85	5.93	3.17	2.50	2.68	
<b>Crime</b>									
IPC	27	46	5.40	3.09	2.81	3.40	2.59	2.35	F: 7.412 p: 0.008
Non-IPC	39	10	5.71	2.41	4.00	2.67	1.26	1.63	
<b>SES</b>									
Low	60	47	5.11	2.55	3.13	2.7	2.06	1.88	F: 1.299 p: 0.91
Middle	6	8	9.5	0.80	7.3	3.78	2.16	3.49	
<b>Family</b>									
Broken	24	21	5.83	2.97	3.75	3.13	2.00	2.48	F: 0.757 p: 0.47
Intact	23	27	6.00	2.48	3.52	3.36	2.47	1.85	
No Family	19	8	5.21	2.80	3.52	2.81	1.68	1.88	
<b>Parent Education</b>									
Illiterate	25	28	4.60	2.73	2.28	2.99	2.20	2.00	F : 6.699 p: 0.0005
Primary	6	12	6.33	1.96	1.50	0.84	4.80	1.72	
Secondary	10	6	8.20	2.39	7.40	2.98	0.80	1.47	
Not Known	25	12	5.64	2.73	4.04	3.01	1.60	1.80	
<b>Parent Status</b>									
Both Alive	23	27	6.0	2.48	3.52	3.36	2.47	1.88	F: 0.5103 p: 0.68
Father Alive	9	8	4.6	2.54	2.55	2.06	2.10	2.14	
Mother Alive	15	13	6.53	3.06	4.46	3.50	1.93	2.73	
Orphan	19	8	5.21	2.80	3.52	2.81	1.68	1.88	

(NCC: Number of Crimes Committed)

For overall sample (N: 66), the reported mean level of academic performance for the children in the study was at class 5.59 (SD: 2.69). Detailed assessment revealed their measured or actual grade level performance to be at class 3.51 (SD: 3.02). Thus, the children showed a difference of 2.8 (SD: 3.49) grades, a discrepancy criteria usually postulated for identifying children with learning disabilities. This does not suggest that the children in this sample have learning disabilities.



It is possible that they have missed schooling, experienced parental neglect, poor teaching, absent supports, or several other unexplored issues that could account for their current profile of academic delay or poor academic performance.

While these figures are to be taken as only cross-sectional indicators, earlier longitudinal studies have consistently reported that poor academic performance especially at ages 10, 14, and 16 are predictors of later violent behaviour and delinquency (Maguin & Loeber, 1996). In contrast, good performance at school, specifically high grades, low rates of in-school behaviour problems during elementary years and regular attendance, have by implication been associated with substantially reduced delinquent involvement (Zingraff et al, 1994). These relationships are shown to be stronger among females than males. It is comparable with the finding in this study, wherein the boys appear to show poorer academic performance and greater academic grade discrepancy (N: 37; Mean: 1.97; SD: 2.27) than girls (N: 29; Mean: 1.58; SD: 1.76) ( $p = 0.45$ ).

In relation to the age variable, there was an increasing and linear gradient of grade discrepancy for children in this sample: between 10-12 years (N: 10; Mean: 1.10; SD: 1.85), 13 -15 years (N: 37; Mean: 1.11; SD: 1.88) and 16+ years (N: 19; Mean: 2.05; SD: 2.32) ( $F = 1.494$ ;  $p = 0.23$ ). These age-related trends of increasing disparity were supported by their education levels too. There was less grade level disparity for children with only primary education (N: 22; Mean: 1.85; SD: 1.25), than among their peers with secondary (N: 28; Mean: 2.11; SD: 1.82) and/or high school (N: 16; Mean: 2.50; SD: 2.68) levels of education ( $F = 0.447$ ;  $p = 0.64$ ).

Related studies have suggested the possible effects of poverty on academic failure and delinquency (Pagani et al, 1999). However, in this study, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (N: 60; Mean: 2.06; SD: 1.88) did not show greater academic grade discrepancies than children from middle socioeconomic status levels (N: 6; Mean: 2.16; SD: 3.49) ( $F = 1.299$ ;  $p = 0.91$ ). Nonetheless, no conclusion can be drawn because this study did not include any representative sample of children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Related variables like type of family being 'intact', 'broken' and/or 'no family' ( $F = 0.757$ ;  $p = 0.4$ ), as well as the parental status of 'both parents being alive', or being an 'orphan' or having 'single parent alive' ( $F = 0.5103$ ;  $p = 0.63$ ), do not appear to yield significant results towards determining the academic grade discrepancy levels of these children.

One variable that emerged as a critical influence on their academic grade discrepancy scores was the nature of the crime for which the children had been

officially adjudicated and committed. Children who had been booked under any of the sections of the Indian Penal Code (N: 27; Mean: 2.59; SD: 2.35) had significantly greater academic discrepancy in comparison to other children (N: 39; Mean: 1.26; SD: 1.63) (F: 7.3412; p: 0.008). The same was true of children whose parents had primary or lower levels of education (F: 6.699; p: 0.0005). Thus, the type of crime and lower levels of parental education are significant variables that are responsible for academic grade level discrepancies among children officially committed as inmates of Juvenile Homes.

### Problem Behaviour:

**Table 2: Distribution of Frequency, Extensity and Severity of Problem Behaviour for Children in relation to various variables**

Variable	N	NCC	Item Frequency			Probability	Domains Spread			Probability	Severity/ Intensity			Probability
			Total	Mean	SD		Total	Mean	SD		Total	Mean	SD	
Overall	66	56	793	12.0	8.3		346	5.2	2.3		1299	19.7	15.4	
<b>Gender</b>														
Boys	37	54	577	15.6	9.2	F: 20.028; P: 0.000	230	6.2	2.3	F: 18.74; P: 0.000	970	26.2	17.1	F: 19.722; P: 0.000
Girls	29	2	216	7.5	3.9		116	4.0	1.8		329	11.3	6.6	
<b>Age (in years)</b>														
10-12	10	10	189	18.9	12.2	F: 5.576; P: 0.008	64	6.4	2.3	F: 1.479; p: 0.236	319	31.9	21.0	F: 5.213; P: 0.008
13-15	37	19	422	11.3	7.2		187	5.1	2.3		719	19.4	14.5	
16+	19	27	182	9.6	3.6		95	5.0	2.3		261	13.7	9.5	
<b>Education</b>														
Primary	22	22	270	10.4	4.3	F: 0.844 P: 0.435	119	5.5	1.5	F: 0.212; p: 0.810	464	17.9	9.8	F: 1.105 P: 0.337
Secondary	28	24	358	12.8	9.4		144	5.1	2.3		593	21.2	17.2	
High	16	10	165	10.3	7.6		81	5.1	2.5		242	15.1	8.4	
<b>Crime</b>														
IPC	27	46	408	15.1	9.7	F: 1.048 P: 0.310	168	6.2	2.2	F: 9.085; p: 0.004	648	24.0	17.5	F: 3.785 P: 0.05
Non-IPC	39	10	385	13.1	6.5		178	4.6	2.2		651	16.7	13.1	
<b>SES</b>														
Low	60	47	729	12.2	8.4	F: 0.170 P: 0.682	314	6.9	2.3	F: 2.843 p: 0.097	1224	20.4	15.8	F: 1.460 P: 0.231
Middle	6	8	64	10.7	8.1		632	5.2	2.7		75	12.5	7.3	
<b>Family</b>														
Broken	24	21	288	12.0	6.0	F: 6.423 P: 0.003	127	5.3	2.6	F: 2.079; P: 0.134	459	19.1	12.8	F: 3.717 P: 0.030
Intact	23	27	348	15.2	5.6		135	5.9	2.3		589	25.6	19.2	

No Family	19	8	157	8.3	7.1		84	4.4	1.8		251	13.2	9.9	
<b>Parent Education</b>														
Illiterate	25	28	353	26.4	8.4	F: 42.431 P: 0.000	146	5.8	2.3	F: 2.939; p: 0.040	588	23.5	15.5	F: 2.589 P: 0.061
Primary	6	12	103	29.4	13.0		41	6.8	1.8		178	29.7	23.3	
Secondary	10	6	99	9.9	6.3			50	5.0	2.3		169	16.9	12.0
Not Known	25	12	218	4.00	6.02		109	4.36	2.20		364	14.56	12.53	
<b>Parent Status</b>														
Both Alive	23	27	349	15.2	10.5	F: 2.628 P: 0.058	135	5.9	2.3	F: 1.520; p: 0.218	589	25.6	19.2	F: 2.483 P: 0.071
Father Alive	9	8	102	11.1	8.7		44	4.9	3.1		181	20.1	16.8	
Mother Alive	15	13	183	12.1	6.1		83	5.5	2.4		278	18.5	10.46	
Orphan	19	8	159	8.3	4.7		84	4.4	1.8		251	13.2	9.9	

Another aspect that was studied was the frequency, spread and intensity of problem behaviour of the children in Juvenile Homes, as observed or reported by their significant caregivers. For overall sample (N: 66), the reported mean number of problem behaviour on a 75-item checklist is 12.02 (SD: 8.34) covering a spread of 5.24 (SD: 2.33) out of the 9 domains. In terms of intensity of problem behaviour, the children showed a mean severity score of 19.68 (SD: 15.38) which is on the higher side. The higher proclivity for problem behaviour in children with learning disabilities, academic under-achievement, and/or juvenile delinquency has been severally demonstrated (Bale, 1981; McConaughy & Ritter, 1986; Hinshaw, 1992). Additionally, the current environment of Observation Homes in the country is grim, with lack of staff, poor or nil supervision, mentoring or infrastructure and no activity scheduling for the inmates, which tends to make their in-stay problem behaviour worse (Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2012; Kumar, 2012).

In relation to gender, boys (N: 37) were reported to have not only more number (Mean: 15.59; SD: 9.17), but also greater domain spread (Mean: 6.22; SD: 2.26) as well as intensity/severity of problem behaviour (Mean: 26.22; SD: 17.05) as compared to girls (N: 29) on all counts (F: 19.72; p: 0.0001). In terms of age, younger children between 10-12 years (N: 10) had greater number and intensity (p: 0.008) rather than extensity or spread of the problem behaviour (p: 0.236) compared to older children of 13-15 years (N: 37) and those above 16 years (N: 19) respectively. In relation to the type of crime, more than frequency (F: 1.048; p: 0.310), the spread/extensity (F: 9.085; p: 0.004) as well as the intensity/severity (F: 3.785; p: 0.05) of the problem behaviour of the children come up as troublesome issues.

For the type of family background, children from 'intact' homes (N: 23) were seen to have both greater number (F: 6.423; p: 0.003) and severity (F: 3.717; p: 0.030), rather than domain spread/extensity (F: 2.079; p: 0.134) of problem behaviour, compared to their peers from 'broken' homes (N: 24) or even those who were orphans or had no homes (N: 19) at all. In relation to levels of education among parents, those designated as 'illiterates' (N: 25) and those with only 'primary' (N: 6) levels of education appeared to contribute to greater frequency (F: 42.431; p: 0.001) and spread (F: 2.939; p: 0.040) of problem behaviour among their children, than parents who had slightly higher education. Other associated variables, such as education levels of the child and/or the socioeconomic status per se, did not emerge as significant in determining the frequency, spread and intensity of the problem behaviour among the children in the Juvenile Homes.

Loeber and Dishion (1983) who reviewed related literature inferred that parental supervision and discipline practices, parent criminality, the child's conduct problems (especially stealing and lying) and poor academic performance were the most important early predictors of later male delinquency. In sum, the reported frequency, spread and intensity of the problem behaviour in children officially adjudicated/committed as inmates of Juvenile Homes is on the higher side even in this sample, particularly in relation to certain critical variables, such as gender, age, type of crime involved, family background, and the educational levels of the parents. The emerging trends from this study are:

Children booked under the Indian Penal Code have greater academic grade discrepancy than other children;

Children born of parents with lower education - especially those with only 'primary' education and 'illiterate' backgrounds - show greater academic grade discrepancy than children whose parents have 'secondary' and/or 'high school' education;

Boys on the whole score higher in terms of frequency (number), extensity (spread of domains) and severity (or intensity) of their problem behaviour than girls with juvenile delinquency;

Younger children (10 -12 years) show greater frequency (number) and severity (or intensity) of problem behaviour than delinquent children in the older age groups of 13 -15 and 16+ years. There is a clear inverse relationship between their increasing frequency (number) and severity (or intensity) as age decreases.

However, the extensity or spread of domains for their problem behaviour is not different across all the three age groups;

Children from 'intact' family backgrounds show greater frequency (number) and severity (or intensity) of problem behaviour than children from 'broken' and 'no' family backgrounds; and,

Lower level of education in parents of juvenile delinquents emerges as a statistically significant variable, as reflected in the greater frequency (number), and extensity (spread of domains) more than severity (or intensity) of their problem behaviour.

As it emerges from this study, a hypothetical profile is more towards a boy (than girl) with juvenile delinquency (under trial or convicted under IPC) who typically hails from an intact family background having illiterate or primary level educated father and mother. Such a child also shows greater degree of academic delay or discrepancy between the grade levels they are located and what they are now actually performing. This discrepancy is found to be present despite their apparently good health and looks, average to above average levels of general intelligence, adequate sensory apparatus and adequate school exposure. Further, these children appear to exhibit a predisposition towards higher frequency (number), extensity (spread of domains) and severity (or intensity) of their problem behaviour. While these are tentative propositions, the critical links between academic performance, learning delays or disabilities and problem behaviour or delinquency are not easy to establish. Although researchers have not yet been able to establish a direct causal relationship between academic achievement and its effect on delinquency, it has been demonstrated that the two variables are interactive and that rates of recidivism are highly correlated with low levels of academic performance. There can also be several environmental risk factors like parenting styles, peer group associations or peer rejection, and individual risk factors like impulsiveness or inability to delay gratification. In-depth studies need to focus on these factors in order to find the links between academic problems, disorders, delays, under-achievements and learning disabilities, and juvenile delinquency.

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