

Juvenile Crime in India: A Study of Causative Factors

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ABSTRACT:

This study seeks to interpret and analyze the multifaceted factors contributing to juvenile offending in India, a country marked by complex socio-economic disparities and evolving legal structures. Juvenile delinquency is not merely an outcome of individual deviance but is often the product of broader structural, familial, psychological, and environmental influences. Drawing from empirical research, legal analysis, and criminological theories, this study examines the role of poverty, dysfunctional family backgrounds, peer pressure, substance abuse, lack of education, and exposure to violence in shaping juvenile behavior. Additionally, it explores how systemic failures—such as inadequate implementation of child welfare laws, poor institutional care, and the absence of early intervention mechanisms—exacerbate the risk of children coming into conflict with the law. Through this interpretation, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding that informs not only academic discourse but also policy and rehabilitative frameworks tailored to the Indian context. The research ultimately advocates for a multidisciplinary and rights-based approach to prevention and reintegration, aligning with the principles enshrined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

INTRODUCTION

Delinquency, according to a particular school of thought, is a continuous trait similar to IQ, height, or weight. According to some theories, socialised behaviour is primarily based on conditioning that is applied by parents, teachers, and peers during a person's early years. The level of training a person receives and their capacity for conditioning—specifically, their ability to respond to offered stimuli—determines their behaviour in later years (Michael, W. 2015).

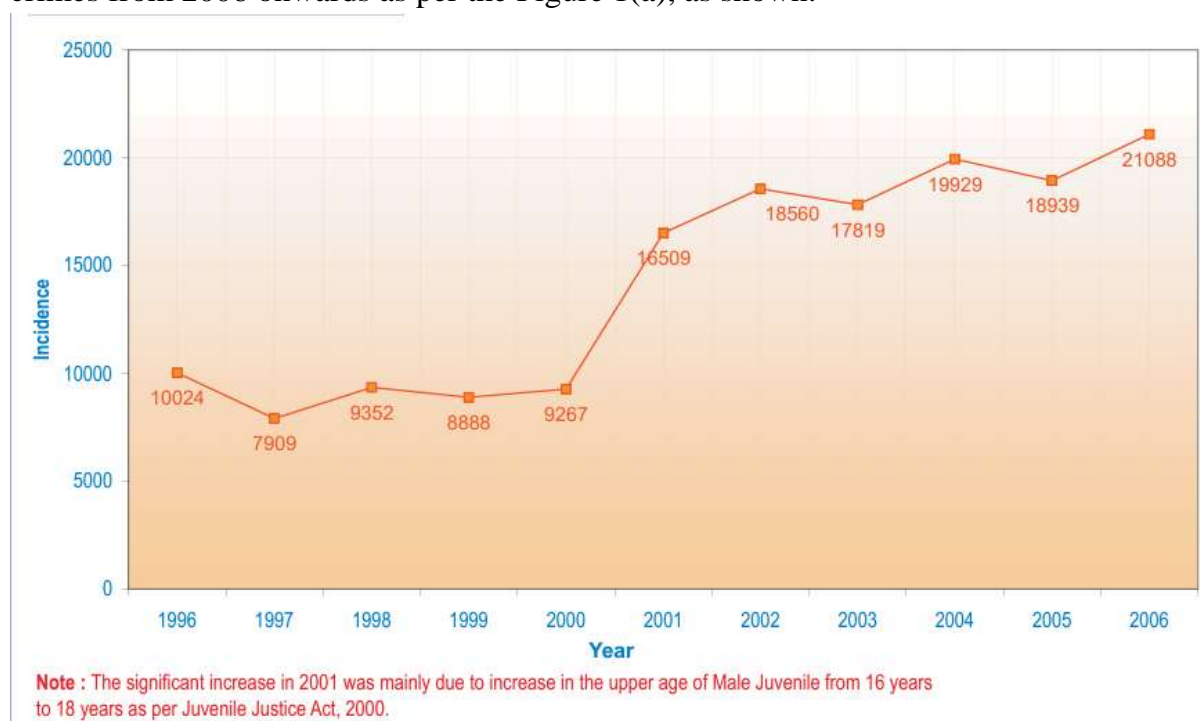
Despite the notion that an illegal act solely results from breaking a criminal legislation, the term's legal definition would encompass a range of moral standards and judgements. Every legislation is dynamic and depends on the factors that shape society. Criminal law consists of a structured set of principles that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, shaped by the collective values, moral standards, customs, and authoritative frameworks of society. These rules are codified through various legal instruments such as treaties, legislative statutes, constitutional provisions, judicial precedents, administrative directives, and, in some jurisdictions, the common law tradition (Martin, H. E. 2010).

Therefore, to put it simply, a criminal is someone who has been determined to have broken the law by committing an offence.

The age of a child is taken into consideration by the legislation in the Indian juvenile justice system while determining the orders that will govern how they are handled. The law also mandates that minors be segregated according to their gender, age, and the kind of conduct for which they were arrested. A thorough evaluation of the child in accordance with their social investigative report (henceforth SIR) is necessary in the first stage of the legal process to guarantee that children are treated appropriately based on their ICPs.

ANALYSIS ON FACTORS IMPACTING JUVENILE OFFENCES IN INDIA

This present chapter presents various offences committed by children, juvenile's background, age, gender etc. in a systematic manner to understand if any particular pattern or link exists between the above. Further to understand the increase in the incidence of crimes from 2006 onwards as per the Figure 1(a), as shown.



**Fig 1 – Juvenile crimes Incidence under IPC (1996-2006) [NCRB Compendium 2012]-
Crimes in India 2021**

Figure 4.1 illustrates a rise in crime incidence, particularly from 2001 onwards, attributed to the elevation of the upper age limit for male juveniles from 16 to 18 years as stipulated by the Juvenile Justice Act of 2000. This study analysed CCL data to investigate the correlation between the socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of children and crime, as well as the relationship between gender, age, and types of crime, using a single sample study in Delhi and a comparison analysis across all metropolitan areas. This chapter is an attempt to understand and establish any links between the above stated variables and patterns to realize a better and effective structure of Rehabilitation and reintegration for CCL. The chapter concentrates on pertinent information from the National Crime Bureau Reports with the aforementioned goal in mind. This chapter is based on data with the

caveat that it is presumed accurate regarding the causes of juvenile offences, their social context, familial structure, and educational background, despite prior indications that studies have demonstrated the incompleteness of NCRB data, which fails to accurately represent the reality of child offences or offences against children.

The chapter takes in relevant data for CCL categorized from:

i. Cumulative data of India; All metropolitan cities as well as data from the sample study of Delhi in two comparative settings (with a 10 year gap in between, viz., 2006 -2016 with 2022). This data was pertaining to various offences committed by children in these two comparative settings under different offence classifications.

This study was done for the limited purpose to understand the effect-flow or change-impact seen in the number of offences or type of offences, link of the same with Age group and Gender of children, if any, in a sixteen-year period lag in an aggregative or summative manner.

ii. Children offences from major metropolitan cities for three-year continuous period sample (2014-2016-2022). This study was to understand if cumulatively the offences committed by children reduced or increased in number during this period of 3 years' time.

iii. Comparative data of India and sample State of Delhi of CCL from the year 2016 - 2022, pertaining to their Education as well as their Family background. This study was to understand a link, if any, between their family background, education background and their tendency or possibility of committing an offence.

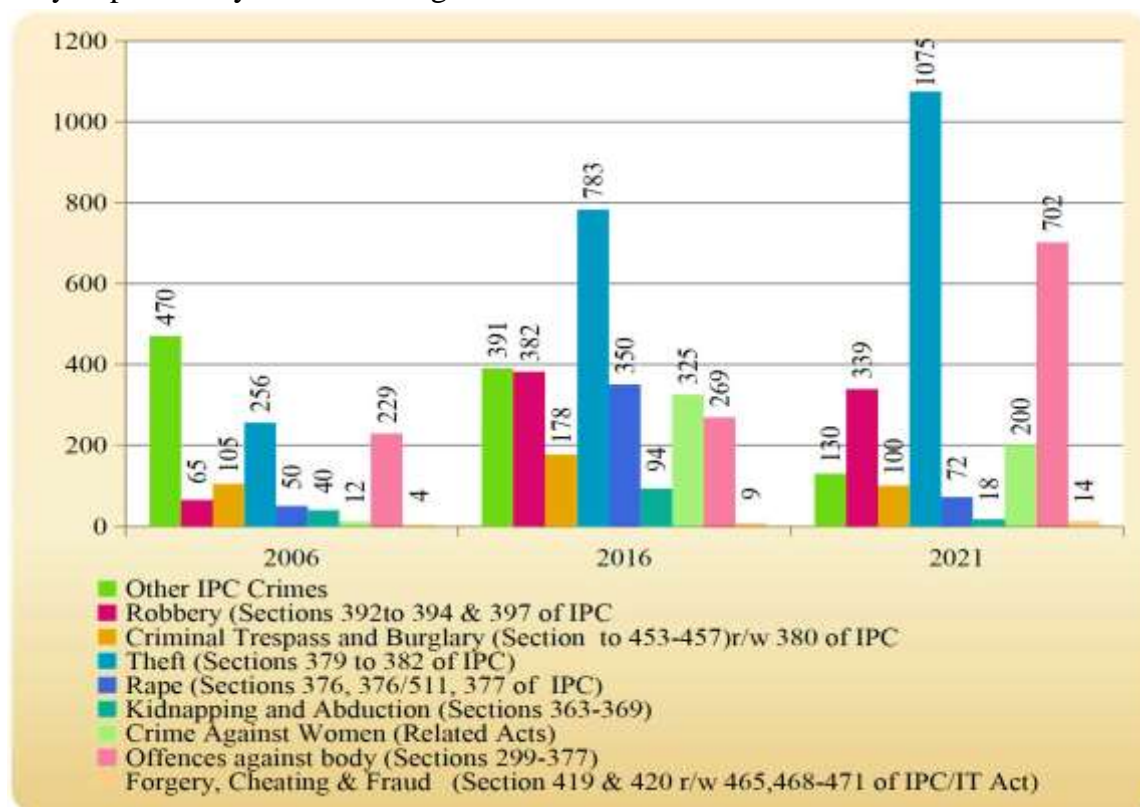


Fig 1(a): Juvenile crimes rate in Delhi under IPC: A Comparative Analysis (2006,2016 and 2021)
[NCRB Compendium 2012,2016 and 2021]

The comparative analysis of several IPC crimes committed by juveniles in the sample State of Delhi in 2006, 2016, and 2021 is provided in figure 4.1(a) above. This data is taken from

two years with a ten year period gap to see if overall there has been a reduction trend in the number of offences being committed by children in Delhi. The data is taken with a caveat assumption that none of the two abovementioned years show any out of the ordinary or drastic hike or reduction in that specific year only and is true depiction of the gradual increase/decrease in offences being committed. Colour scheme of orange depicts the data from year 2016 and blue depicts 2006 data and separated by ten years gap. It was observed from the data of the above two years, that there was not a reduction rather a considerable increase in the numbers of offence by the children in conflict with law from 2006 to 2016 and a whopping increase in 2021.

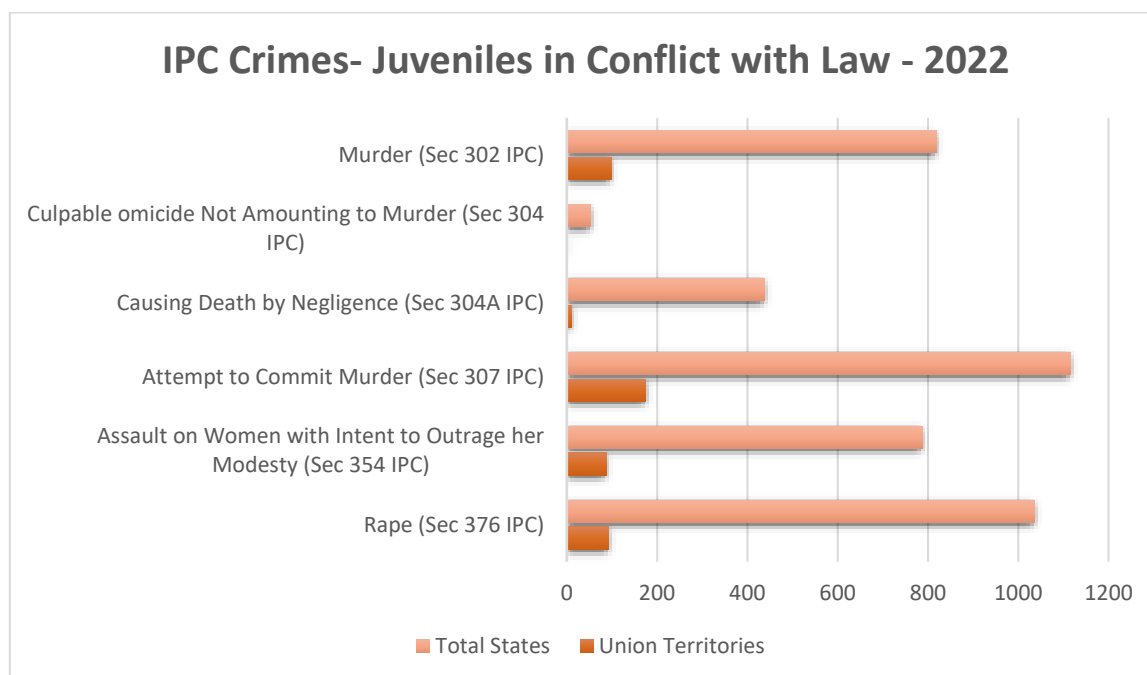


Fig: 1(b)- Juvenile Crime rate in Delhi under IPC- Year 2022 [NCRB data]

The bar chart presents data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the year 2022, focusing on juvenile offences recorded under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in Delhi. It offers a comparative look at the number of cases reported in Union Territories versus those in Indian states across various categories of crime. A clear pattern emerges from the data—states consistently report far more cases than Union Territories. This gap is especially striking in rape-related offences, where states reported 1,037 cases, while Union Territories recorded only 93.

Furthermore, if compared the Figure 4.1 (a) with 4.1(b), it can be seen, that there has been a massive increase in the Crime rate especially the Rape (Section 376 IPC), Assault on Women (Section 354 IPC), Attempt to Commit Murder (Section 307 IPC) and Murder (Section 302 IPC).

Looking at the said data it can be said that crime committed by children isn't decreasing in the State of Delhi. Data although isn't conclusive to state that the rehabilitation or reintegration is ineffective and hence there are more crime committed by children.

When different types of offences are examined, it is evident that the number of crimes

against women has significantly increased, rising from 12 in 2006 to 173 in 2016. Additionally, throughout this time, there was an increase in adolescent rape offences from 50 to 195. Theft is another juvenile violation that has shown a high rise, rising from 256 in 2006 to 783 after ten years. Furthermore, 30,555 charges have been lodged against juveniles in violation of the law. In 2022, a total of 37,780 juveniles were arrested throughout 30,555 cases, with 33,261 arrests made under the IPC and 4,519 under the SLL. Moreover, reported cases of juvenile involvement in offences such as criminal trespass and larcenary showed a notable increase, rising from 105 incidents in 2006 to 178 in 2016. Crime rates persisted at elevated levels, albeit lower than other categories, despite the overall incidence of offences against the person, which encompasses murder, causing death by negligence, attempted murder, attempted culpable homicide, grievous bodily harm, rioting, and inflicting simple and grievous injuries through reckless driving. For example, the number of offences against the body increased from 229 in 2006 to 275 in 2016. In contrast, the number of cases classified as "other IPC crimes" decreased somewhat from 470 minors to 391 juveniles in 2016.

According to NCRB data, the least common juvenile offence was cheating (under sections 419 and 420), with four occurrences in Delhi in 2006 and nine in 2016. During this ten-year span, there was a minor increase in kidnapping and abduction, with 40 cases in 2006 and 47 children in 2016.

Of the crimes perpetrated by juveniles in 2016, 55.87% (total crime = 2450, $(1369/2450)*100$) were related to the illegal and forcible possession of other properties, including theft, robbery, criminal trespass & burglary, extortion, dacoity, and cheating, which accounted for 1369 incidents. The number of cases of the same aforementioned offences has increased by 24.52% to 2452 cases. This suggests that financial and economic circumstances account for the majority of youth crimes.

The aforementioned figures do not indicate a significantly reduces the number especially offences by juveniles in the State of Delhi. The state's efforts to reduce juvenile criminality can undoubtedly be attributed to a number of things. Their socioeconomic status, drug use, and other environmental factors could be among them. Even though numerous research have linked these child offences to their environment, it is impossible to say with certainty based on the evidence currently available. Numerous studies have established theories regarding the potential causes of juvenile offences. His or her **"not being in school"** or **"dropping out of school"** with "poor school attendance" are factors that could have contributed to the offence. Within the school premises, a child is assigned a daily routine that is structured with a daily productive goal. Another contributing factor could be the *type of educational institution*, as it is often observed that schools which are overcrowded and lack proper structure may inadvertently create environments that hinder student engagement and discipline, potentially increasing the likelihood of behavioural issues among children who often exhibit delinquent behaviour due to the institution's inability to maintain positive discipline and productive engagement. In Indian environment, which is still developing and poverty stricken, it can be stated that a major population of children cannot afford to go to school, even with a RTE in place. In most circumstance children remain earning members of their households, consequently their uneducated and poor parents seldom have in their priority to send them to school. Even when they do,

children supervision remains minimum, as parents themselves are out of the home earning wagers and livelihood for basic subsistence.

"Violence in the Home" is a major contributing factor to delinquency. It has been well noted that youngsters who experience domestic abuse typically grow up to engage in delinquent behaviour. Compared to other childrens, these childrens are frequently observed to be more aggressive and irritable. **"Peer pressure"** has being recognized as another benevolent factors to the child's delinquent behaviour. It has been discovered that youngsters who spend time with other childrens who engage in delinquent behaviour are more prone to engage in such behaviour themselves. **"Poorer Neighbourhoods"** could be held responsible for the same reason. It is frequently seen that when certain youngsters in a neighbourhood exhibit delinquent behaviour, others tend to emulate this conduct and subsequently develop similar inclinations over time.

It has been widely noted that **"substance abuse"** actually serves to strengthen and promote the child's delinquent behaviour. In some cases, youngsters develop a substance use habit early on, which eventually contributes to their delinquent behaviour. As a result, substance use and delinquent behaviour are actually closely associated and influence each other's inclinations. Since the childrens develop negative substance usage habits, they turn to various illegal actions to satisfy their requirements, which leads to their eventual imprisonment.

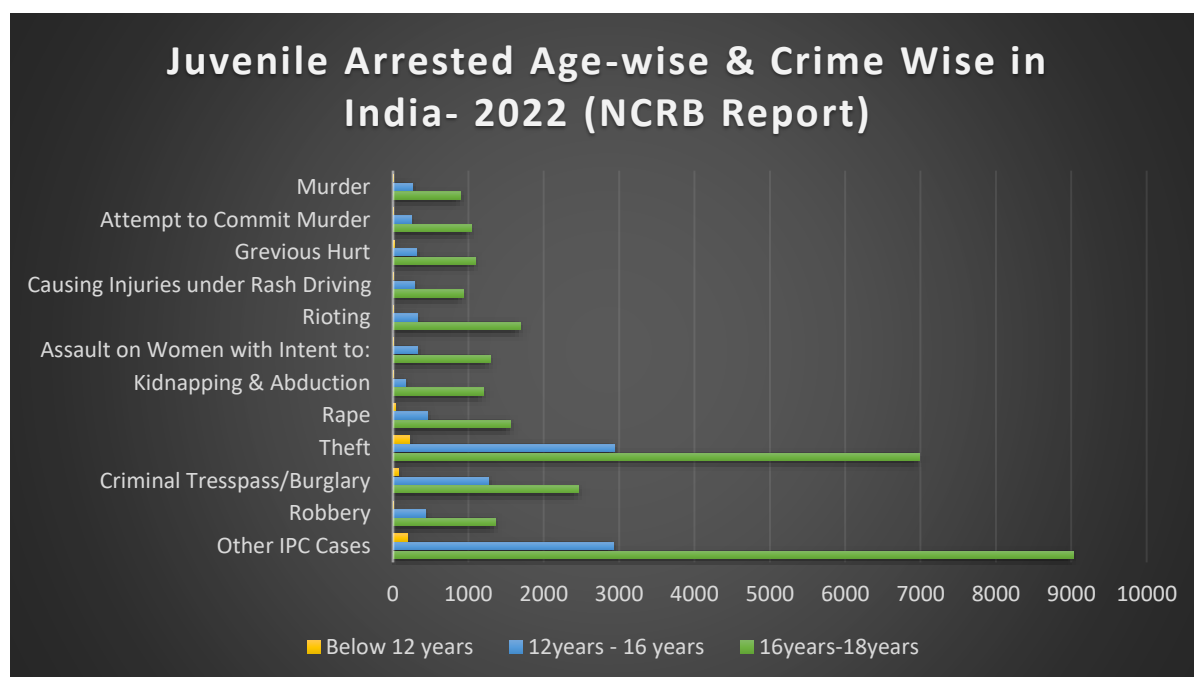


Fig. 1.2: juveniles apprehended age-wise and crime-wise in India -2022 (NCRB Report, Ministry of Home affairs) Source – Prepared by the researcher (2023)

The significance of "Parental Influence" is another essential aspect that must be addressed here. Research indicates that the conduct of parents and other adults within the family and community significantly influences a child's delinquent behaviour; offspring of violent

parents are more prone to engage in juvenile offenders over time, whereas children of educated and nonviolent parents are less likely to do so. In the next section, data on CCL arrests nationwide in 2016 was gathered in order to determine the offending trend by age group, identify any connections between the two, and comprehend the offending trend nationwide. Figure 1.2 offers insights into the age-wise and crime-wise distribution of juveniles apprehended in India during 2022, based on data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs. The bar chart categorizes juveniles into three distinct age groups: under 12 years, 12 to 16 years, and 16 to 18 years. It further classifies the offences under several IPC categories such as murder, rape, theft, robbery, assault on women, kidnapping and abduction, among others.

A closer look at the figures reveals that juveniles aged between 16 and 18 years account for the majority of apprehensions across nearly all offence types. For instance, cases categorized as “Other IPC Offences” involve the highest number of juveniles, with over 9,000 individuals from the oldest age group, around 2,900 from the 12–16 bracket, and 186 from those below 12.

Theft ranks as the second most common offence, with nearly 7,000 apprehensions among those aged 16–18, about 2,900 in the 12–16 group, and just over 200 in the youngest category. Similarly, burglary and criminal trespass account for over 2,400 cases in the oldest age group, showing a steady decline in younger categories.

In terms of serious crimes, rape-related cases involved 1,561 juveniles aged 16–18, followed by 464 in the 12–16 range, and 29 under the age of 12. Kidnapping and abduction show a similar pattern, with most cases linked to the oldest age group.

Assault on women with intent and rioting are also more prevalent among older juveniles, with each offence involving well over a thousand cases in the 16–18 category. Meanwhile, traffic-related offences, such as causing injury through rash driving, and grievous hurt, also see a higher incidence in this group.

Attempted murder and murder cases, though lower in number compared to other categories, still show a dominant presence of the 16–18 age group. Robbery follows the same trend, with over 1,300 individuals aged 16–18 involved.

Overall, the data clearly indicates that criminal activity among juveniles tends to be concentrated within the 16 to 18 age bracket, with theft and miscellaneous IPC offences being the most frequently reported. A notable decline is observed in the number of apprehensions as the age category becomes younger across all types of crimes.

The data above reveals odd and depressing facts. Crimes against the human body, crimes involving violence, and crimes involving money gain (such as thefts and burglaries) are being committed by the children. The fact that youngsters under the age of 12 have been implicated and arrested suggests that their behaviour must be influenced by other forces. These offences are influenced by family, socioeconomic, and other circumstances. All of these facts point to the urgent need for social integration and rehabilitation as forms of reformatory intervention. In keeping with Figure 4.2, Table 4.2 (a) and (b) below lists the juveniles who were arrested in India in 2016 for a variety of offences, broken down by both age and gender. The NCB data from 2016 states that 41,826 adolescents were arrested in 2016 alone. There were 1049 women arrested compared to 40,777 boys. This indicates that there is a significant male-to-female arrest rate among young people.

Juveniles commit theft more often than any other documented crime, with 10,139 juveniles being arrested for this specific violation. 10,022 guys in total were in trouble with the law, but there were also 117 girls.

Offense Category	Below 12 Yrs	12 Yrs- 16 Yrs	16 Yrs- 18 Yrs	Boys	Girls
Murder	13	263	901	1138	39
Culpable Homicide (CH) not Amounting to Murder	5	26	38	69	0
Causing Death by Negligence	5	65	230	299	1
Attempt to Commit Murder	4	239	1035	1257	21
Attempt to Commit Culpable Homicide	0	15	65	79	1
Grievous Hurt	15	313	1090	1359	59
Causing Injuries under Rash Driving	7	285	931	1203	20
Unlawful Assembly	2	54	122	173	5
Rioting	10	325	1691	1970	56
Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty	10	329	1288	1613	14
Insult to Modesty of Women	1	28	65	94	0
Kidnapping and Abduction	4	162	1198	1354	10
Human Trafficking	0	0	21	15	6
Rape	29	464	1561	2043	11
Attempt to Rape	2	18	53	73	0
Unnatural Offence/s	8	92	118	217	1
Theft	222	2935	6982	10022	117
Criminal Trespass/Burglary	78	1268	2466	3790	22
Robbery	10	433	1355	1795	3
Dacoity	0	54	273	321	6
Extortion	0	10	92	102	0
Cheating	0	25	163	185	3
Arson	2	18	70	89	1
Forgery	0	2	17	16	3
Counterfeiting	0	3	11	13	1
Other IPC Cases	186	2921	9030	11488	649
Total				40777	1049
Grand Total				41826	

Table): Juvenile apprehended in India -gender-wise, age-wise and crime-wise (2016)- NCRB report 2016 [Source: <https://www.ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-year-wise.html?year=2016&keyword=>]

A significant portion of these youngsters also commit serious and horrific crimes including murder, grievous injury, and attempted murder, as can be seen from table 4.1(a) above. Once more, the bulk of these children are between the ages of 16 and 18. Therefore, age must be taken into particular account while considering CCL rehabilitation and reintegration. How the programs and services offered must accommodate various age groups and offer assistance in ensuring that these children, who have already attained the mental capacity of adolescence, can be guided in the correct way. The overall number of juveniles arrested in 2016 was 41,826; however, the following figure only includes those who were apprehended under the three age groups of under 12, 12–6, and 16–18 years. Of these, 1.5% (613 juveniles) were younger than 12 years old, 24.7% (10347 juveniles) were between 12 and 16 years old, and the biggest percentage (73.8%, 30866 juveniles) were between 16 and 18 years old.

It should be noted that, regardless of the modest number, authorities should not arrest minors under the age of twelve. It was discovered during the current study that these youngsters, who are under 12, are also enrolled in Delhi's CCL daycare centres. It is highly recommended that children of that age not be placed in institutional care intended for CCL. In recent years, the Nirbhaya case and other sexual assaults have gained attention. In 2016, a total of 2053 minors were arrested for the infraction, with 1561 of them being between the ages of 16 and 18. Although 464 children from 12 to 16 were arrested for the same act, it was startling to learn that 29 children under the age of 12 were arrested in India in 2016. Another violation with an extremely high percentage of adolescent arrests (3,812) is criminal trespassing or burglary. However, among the minors, there were merely 22 girls. It is important to reiterate that individuals aged 16 to 18 are predominantly accountable for these violations.

Juveniles Apprehended - IPC Crimes (Crime Head, Age Group & Gender-wise) - 2022

SL	Crime Head	Cases Reported against Juveniles	Below 12 Years				12 Years & Above and below 16 Years			
			Boys	Girls	Trans	Total	Boys	Girls	Trans	Total
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]
1	Murder	917	8	0	0	8	296	3	0	299
2	Culpable Homicide not amounting to Murder	54	0	0	0	0	18	1	0	19
3	Causing Death by Negligence	449	1	0	0	1	89	2	0	91
4	Dowry Deaths	22	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	4
5	Abetment of Suicide	67	0	0	0	0	13	1	0	14
6	Attempt to Commit Murder	1292	16	0	0	16	405	1	0	406
7	Attempt to commit Culpable Homicide	134	1	0	0	1	34	0	0	34
8	Attempt to Commit Suicide	19	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
9	Miscarriage, Infanticide, Foeticide and Abandonment	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Hurt	6023	32	2	0	34	1632	41	0	1673
11	Wrongful Restraint/Confinement	85	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	26
12	Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty	874	2	0	0	2	211	2	0	213
13	Kidnapping and Abduction	947	5	0	0	5	138	0	0	138
14	Human Trafficking	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Exploitation of Trafficked Person	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Selling of Minors for Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	Buying of Minors for Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Rape	1130	7	0	0	7	247	1	0	248
19	Attempt to Commit Rape	29	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
20	Unnatural Offences	77	3	0	0	3	49	0	0	49
	Offences Affecting the Human Body (Total)	12132	75	3	0	78	3167	52	0	3219
21	Offences against State	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Offences against the State (Total)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	Unlawful Assembly	81	1	0	0	1	41	1	0	42
23	Riots	753	2	1	0	3	216	8	0	224
24	Offences promoting enmity between different groups	15	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
25	Affray	18	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
	Offences against Public Tranquillity (Total)	867	3	1	0	4	271	9	0	280
26	Theft	6495	30	0	0	30	1587	13	0	1600
27	Burglary	2030	15	0	0	15	675	1	0	676
28	Extortion & Blackmailing	113	0	0	0	0	28	0	0	28

Juveniles Apprehended - IPC Crimes (Crime Head, Age Group & Gender-wise) - 2022 (Continued)

SL	Crime Head	Cases Reported against Juveniles	Below 12 Years				12 Years & Above and below 16 Years			
			Boys	Girls	Trans	Total	Boys	Girls	Trans	Total
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]
29	Robbery	1152	1	0	0	1	255	2	0	257
30	Attempt to Commit Dacoity/Robbery	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
31	Dacoity	134	0	0	0	0	45	0	0	45
32	Making Preparation and Assembly for committing Dacoity	79	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
33	Criminal Misappropriation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
34	Criminal Breach of Trust	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
35	Dishonestly Receiving/Dealing-in Stolen Property	129	0	0	0	0	43	0	0	43
	Offences against Property (Total)	10146	46	0	0	46	2645	16	0	2661
36	Counterfeiting	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
37	Forgery, Cheating & Fraud	111	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	30
	Offences Relating to Documents & Property Marks (Total)	115	0	0	0	0	32	0	0	32
38	Offences relating to Elections	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
39	Disobedience to order duly promulgated by Public Servant	20	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
40	Harbouring an Offender	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	Offences relating to Adulteration or Sale of Food/Drugs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42	Rash Driving on Public way	865	8	0	0	8	176	1	0	177
43	Obstruction on Public way	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	Sale of obscene Books/Objects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
45	Obscene Acts and Songs at Public Places	202	1	0	0	1	36	0	0	36
46	Offences relating to Religion	16	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	4
47	Cheating by Impersonation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	Offences related to Mischief	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
49	Arson	43	1	0	0	1	8	0	0	8
50	Criminal Trespass	220	3	1	0	4	59	0	0	59
51	Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives	69	0	0	0	0	9	3	0	12
52	Circulate False/Fake News/Rumours	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
53	Criminal Intimidation	784	1	0	0	1	84	3	0	87
54	Insult to the Modesty of Women	36	1	0	0	1	11	0	0	11
	Miscellaneous IPC Crimes(Total)	2277	16	1	0	17	396	7	0	403
55	Other IPC crimes	1033	3	0	0	3	328	2	0	330
	Total Cognizable IPC crimes	26571	143	5	0	148	6839	86	0	6925

Table : Juvenile in conflict apprehended in India – Crime-wise, Age-wise and gender-wise – 2022 (NCRB Crime Report 2022. Source: <https://www.ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-year-wise.html?year=2022&keyword=>)

The NCRB data makes it evident that a large number of children are even detained as members of the gang. Nearly 1500–2000 adolescents were detained for IPC offences, including rioting, trafficking, assault, kidnapping, and abduction. It has been widely noted that it is relatively simpler to change or rehabilitate children's behaviour in the early years of life. It is simpler for parents and other adults to instill good behaviours in their children during their formative years and to take remedial action, such as proper rehabilitation, if necessary. Therefore, prompt intervention and subsequent corrective rehabilitation become crucial (S. C. Verma, 2017).

From an Indian standpoint as well, it is highly pertinent and crucial that the three pillars of government—executive, judicial, and legislative—work together to minimise juvenile delinquency cases and causes.

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child provides comprehensive protection for children against abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It also outlines the guidelines, standards, and responsibilities that various authorities involved in child welfare must adhere to in their care and protection efforts.. It establishes protocols that all states must follow to protect children from exploitation.

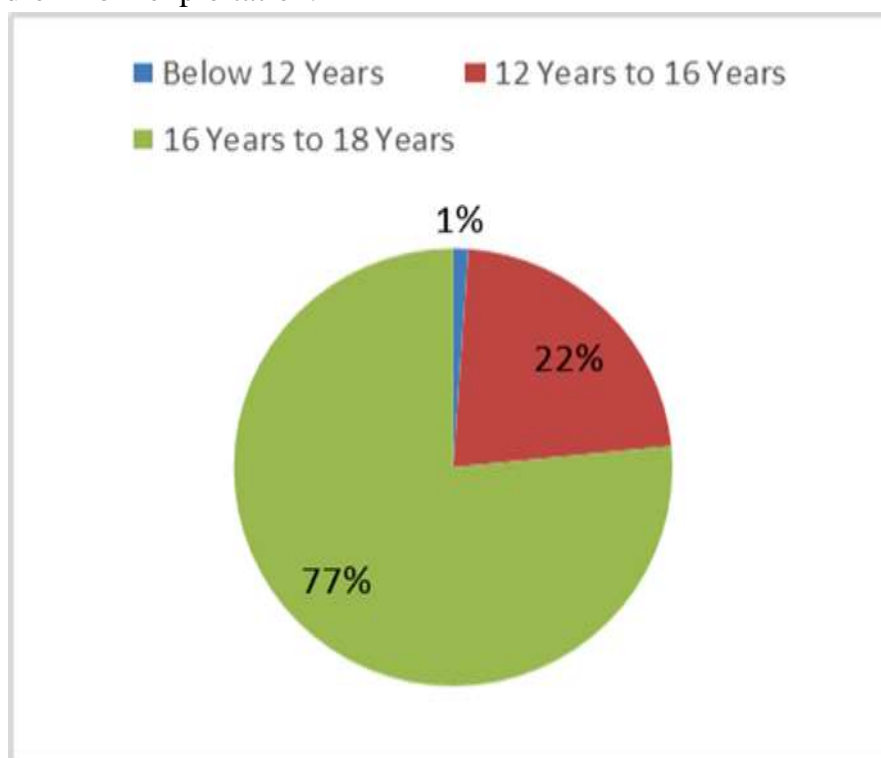


Fig. 1.3(c): juveniles apprehended in India Age-wise Year 2016 (Source- Pie chart from NCRB report 2016) in Crimes 2016

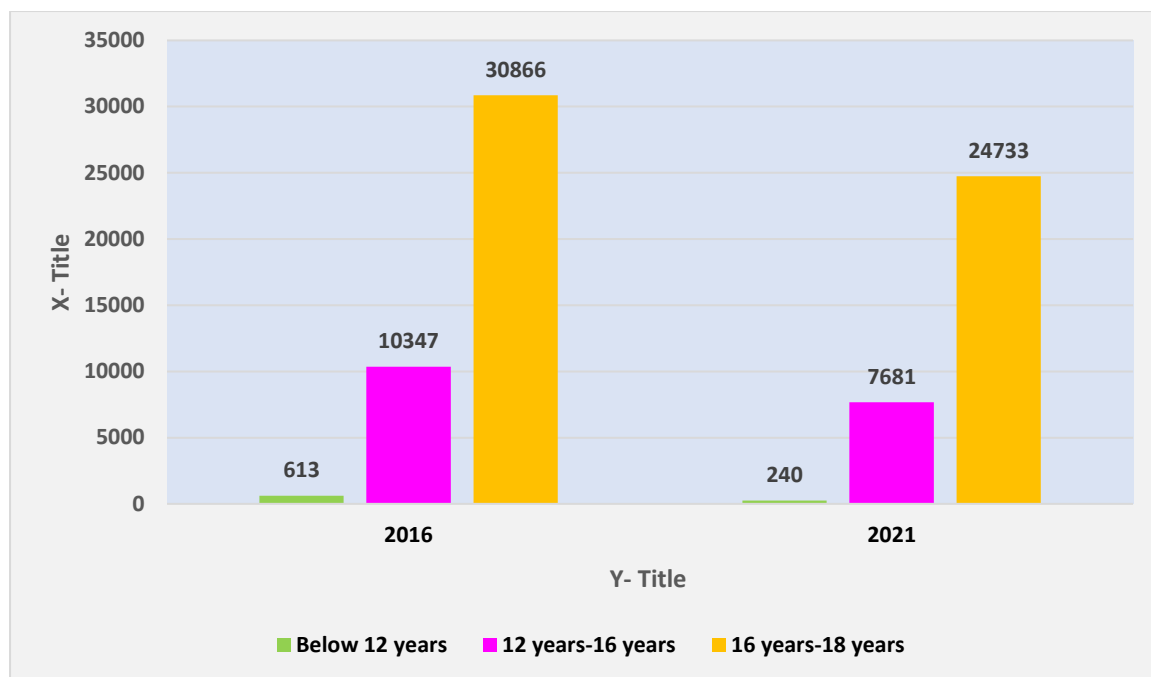


Fig. 1.4(d): juveniles apprehended in India Age-wise[A Comparative analysis -2016 & 2021]- Source: Data collected from NCRB Crime Report 2016 and 2021 [Prepared by the researcher-2023]

The age and gender distributions of arrested children in India are illustrated by pie charts in Figures 4.3(a), 4.3(b), 4.4(a), and 4.4(b). The aforementioned study division was crucial for establishing a foundational comprehension of the statistical correlation between the structure of rehabilitation services and processes, which must address the distinct demands of various age groups and genders of juvenile offenders. According to previous studies on juvenile offences, offending rates typically start increasing during preadolescence or early adolescence, reach their highest point in late adolescence, and then gradually decline as individuals transition into majority. The pie chart in figure 4.3 illustrates that 77% of boys aged 16 to 18 are apprehended for various infractions, whereas only 3% of girls face arrest in India.

While the number of females in dispute with the law in India is very low, previous research has shown that juvenile frameworks in India treats female juvenile offenders differently than it does male juvenile offenders. Due to the POCSO Act's application, these few girls' offenders share the Observation House space (at Nirmal Chhaya) with the majority of other underage girls residing there in the State of Delhi. The JJ Act 2015 provides for segregation of CCL based on their gender too. Even though the number of girl child who committed offence were limited at the time in the State of Delhi, there needs towards rehabilitation and social reintegration are equally important as well as delicate.

Their segregation, medical assessment and timely medical intervention and providing them with capacity building can go a long way towards their effective reintegration back to society. In addition to these the JJB must ensure that the gender differences

must be considered while formulating a R&R module for all CCL.

Table:4.2 (c)- Juveniles apprehended based on genders for the year(2017-2021)

YEAR	BOYS	GIRLS	TRANSGENDER
2017	40155	265	0
2018	37984	272	0
2019	38405	280	0
2020	34958	394	0
2021	37092	350	2

Source: Data from NCRB Reports (2017-2021) in Crimes in India

From Table 4.2 (c) clearly reveals a clear upward trend in the number of juveniles apprehended under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL) over recent years. The data indicates that boys constitute the majority of those apprehended, with significantly fewer cases involving girls and transgender individuals. Notably, there has been a steady rise in the number of offences involving both male and female juveniles over the past five years.

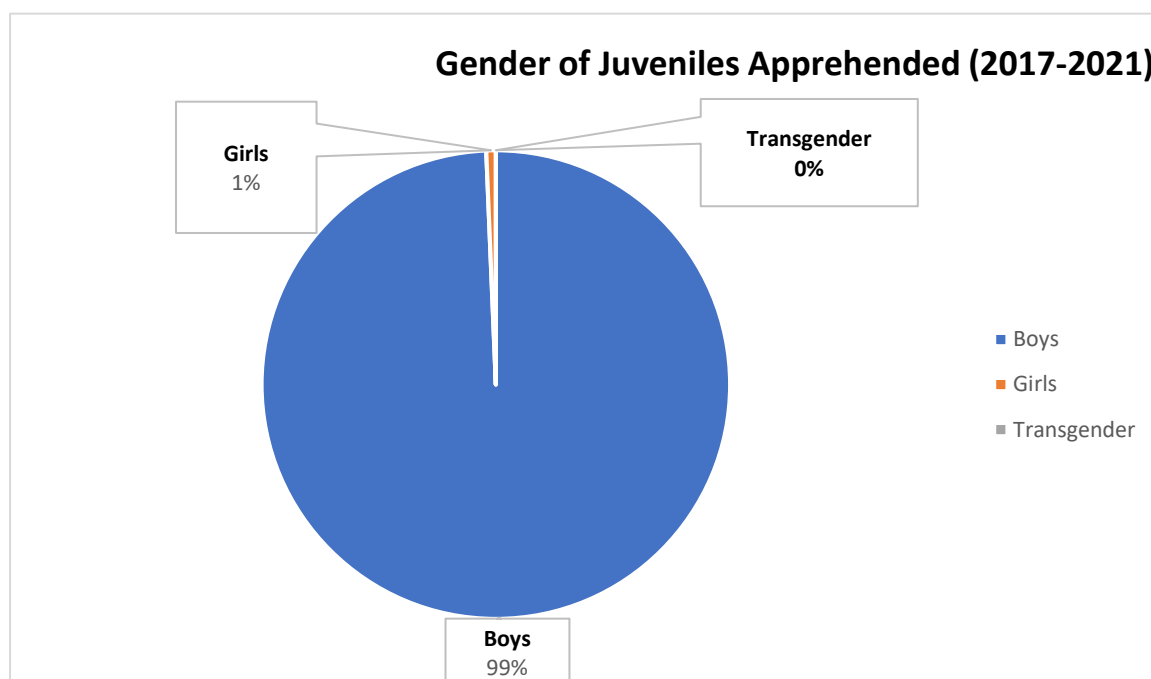


Fig -Gender-wise juveniles apprehended in India – trends from 2017-2021.

Source: Prepared by the researcher (2023)

As depicted in Fig 4.3(c), boys have been consistently more involved in criminal activities, accounting for approximately 99% of the cases between 2017 and 2021, while girls represented only about 1% during the same period.

As previously mentioned, the study found that a large number of girls were living together in the OH/ and Children Home (both of which are shared facilities at Nirmal Chhayya) in the state of Delhi due to the **Protection of Children from Sexual**

Offences (POCSO) Act. Many are disproportionately accused of status offences and live in substandard conditions. These offences committed by these girls could include incorrigibility, running away, and having sex when underage. Male and female juvenile offenders have historically received distinct treatment from the juvenile courts (Andrew L. S. Brooke M. W., et al, 2014). Accordingly, the Indian juvenile justice system has frequently sought to prevent girls from engaging in sexual immorality to the greatest extent possible while also reducing the delinquent behaviour of male offenders (Meda C.L., 1977). This shows a patriarchal tilt of our whole legal system which permeates even the child laws. As far as rehabilitation and social reintegration measure goes, it must be an endeavour of the State to ensure the mandate listed under provision of law must reach the girl CCL too.

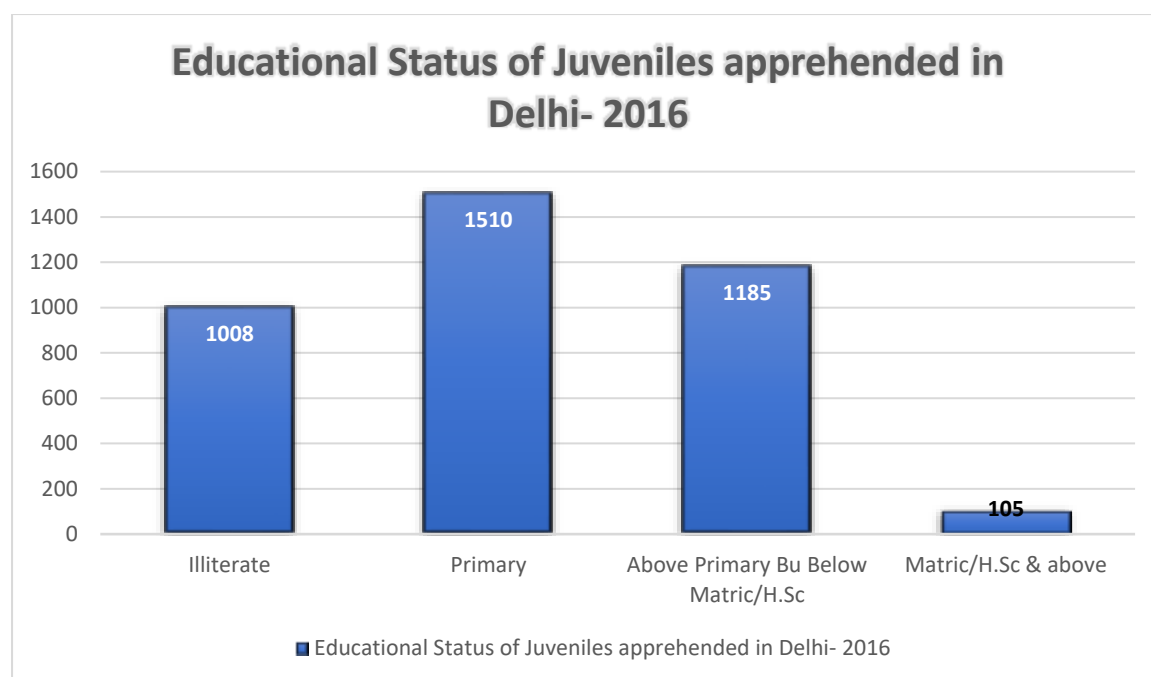


Fig: Educational profiles of Juveniles apprehended in Delhi- 2016 [NCRB report 2016] Crimes in India
Source- Prepared by the researcher(2023)

The goal of the next section, which used education as the variable, was to determine whether there was any connection between education and a child committing an infraction in the State of Delhi. Education is a vital component of any community. A child who attends a regular school and is actively engaged in activities is generally seen to be less prone to engage in illegal behaviour. Because it would establish a link between education and a child's overall behaviour and deterrence of crime, data on juveniles' educational backgrounds becomes a valuable source. The educational background of minors detained in Delhi under various IPCs in 2016 is shown in figure 4.4 above.

Figure 4.5 showed that although 1008 of the children arrested in 2016 were illiterate, a much higher proportion of youngsters had some education (primary and below matriculation).

About 97% of the juveniles that are arrested are below the matriculation level; of these, 26.47% are illiterate, 39.65% have only completed primary school, and 31.12% have completed basic school but not Matric/H.Sec. Additionally, 3% or more of the young people who are arrested have completed Matric or H.Sec. There is insufficient data to determine whether or not the pupils dropped out of school. It is evident from the data that it is not possible to say with certainty that children who do not attend school are the ones that commit offences. Thus, it can be said that, contrary to popular belief, being illiterate has nothing to do with criminal activity. At the same time, it must be remembered that a large population of children who come in conflict with law come from economically weaker family set ups. They have access to schools and neighborhoods which are lacking in quality resources compared to the other schools and neighborhoods which can ensure a healthy and good intellectual and overall development of a child.

A discernible correlation exists between education and the criminal behaviour of children in legal conflict, yet the aforementioned studies lack sufficient conclusiveness to demonstrate a direct connection between education and criminal activity.

The predominant age range of these children is 16 to 18, as illustrated in Fig. 4.3 and Table 4.1. The overwhelming majority of these individuals lack secondary education qualifications.

Hence, being in the age group of between 16-18 years and yet majority population with education below matriculation, it can be stipulated that even when most of CCL did enter school, they didn't complete it. Many of the children do leave school around matriculation or even before to undertake unskilled jobs so as to provide for their families economic support (DCPCR Study 2017)

The data from NCRB isn't conclusive to state that at the time children were apprehended, if they were in school or not or if they were dropouts. Although this seems to be a very important factor to understand if children are school drop-outs, and consequently that may be a very vital rehabilitation service towards their all-round development. Children who are engaged in school with optimum resources, do tend to use their time more productively each day. It is a cause of concern to come to a stipulation that most of the children are school drop outs, but as per the provided data, that seems to be a logical assumption. They remain more prone to exposure of untowardly elements of society than positive or productive engagement each day within a school system.

To ensure children grow up to be contributing members of society, appropriate education is a crucial step. Drug addiction, poor peer pressure, bad company, and school dropouts all lead to youth running short of the law.

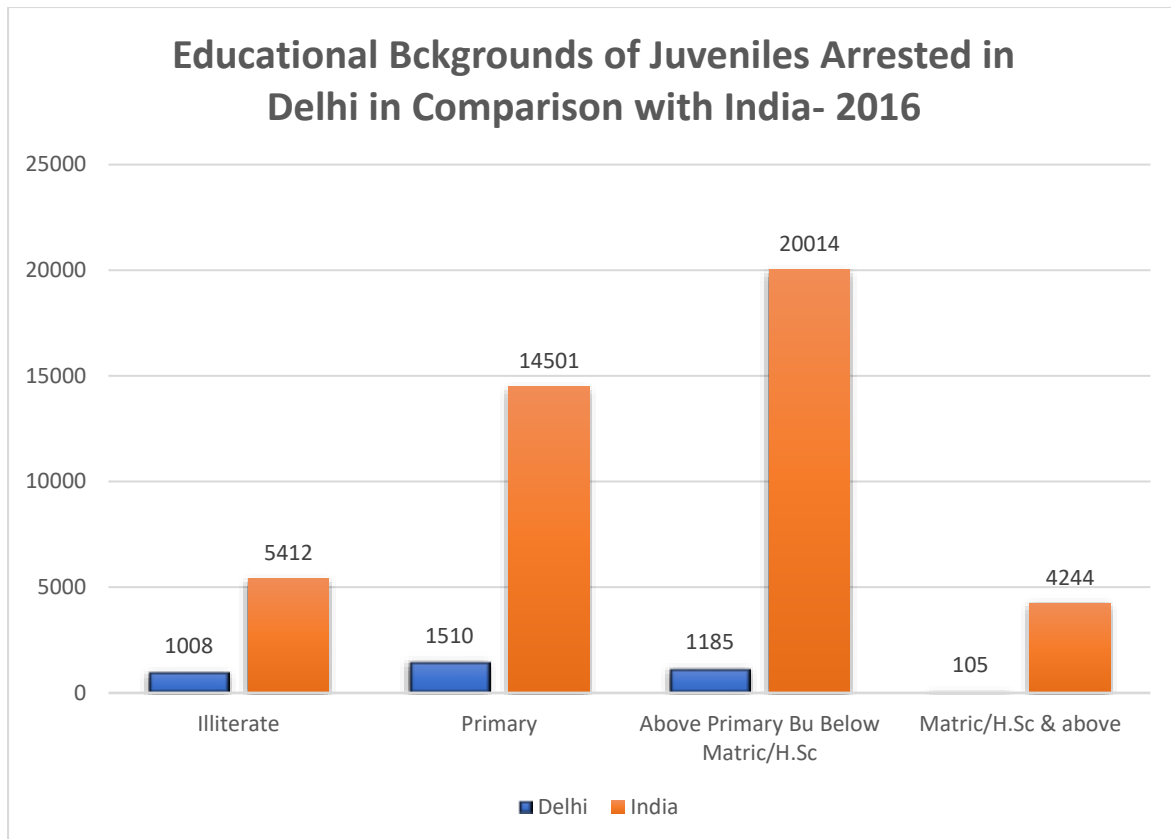


Fig :Educational background of Juvenile arrested in Delhi and India – 2016 (NCRB report)

Source- Prepared by the researcher (2023)

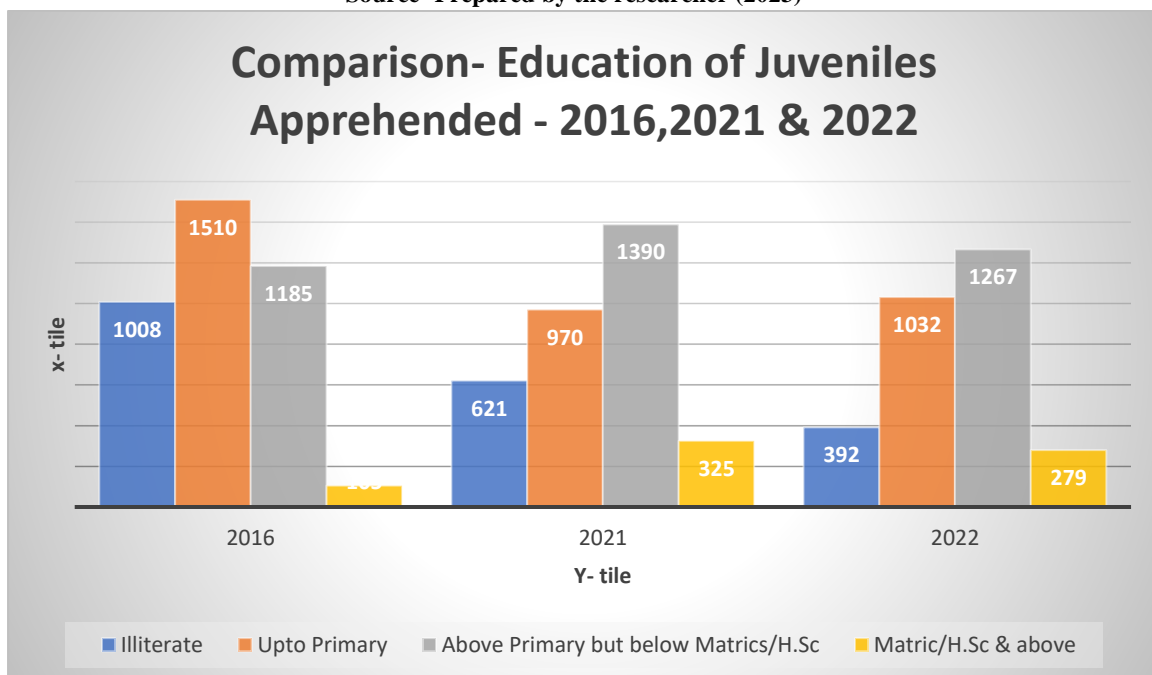


Fig : Comparative Data on Educational Background of Juveniles – in Delhi (2016 & 2021) NCRB report – 2016,2021 & 2022 [Crimes in India]

Source: Prepared by Researcher

The figure above contrasts the educational backgrounds of juveniles caught in Delhi and across India. Upon comparing the educational background data of juveniles in Delhi with that of India, the findings were analogous. In 2016, in India, 90.39% of

apprehended juveniles had an education level below matric, comprising 12.25% illiterates, 32.83% with elementary education, and 45.31% with education above primary but significant portion of juveniles in conflict with the law had not completed matriculation, with only 9.61% having attained education at the matric level or higher. In Delhi, the percentage of juveniles who surpassed matriculation stood at merely 3%, considerably lower than the national average of 9%. Out of 14,501 juveniles across India who had received primary-level education, 1,510 were from Delhi, highlighting a concerning trend of limited educational attainment among offending youth in the capital.

The chart above shows the educational qualifications of minors apprehended in Delhi in 2016 for different offenses outlined in the Indian Penal Code, and it stands at 5.6. Based on Figure 4.4 (a) and 4.4(b), despite the presence of Despite the fact that 1008 children were illiterate upon their arrest in 2016 and 621 in 2021, there is still a greater proportion of children who have received at least some level of education (ranging from primary to below matriculation). In 2016, there were 1510 juveniles, and in 2021, there were 970 juveniles. Those who have been captured and do not possess a high school diploma or higher.

Among these young individuals, 26.47 percent were unable to read in 2016 and 18.7 percent in 2021, 39.65 percent had received primary education in 2016 and 29.3 percent in 2021, and 31.12 percent had education beyond primary school but below matriculation or high school level in 2016 and 42.04 percent in 2021. Additionally, around three percent of juveniles arrested in 2016 and 9.83 percent arrested in 2021 had completed high school or above in terms of education levels. The evidence is inconclusive, so it's impossible to say if the children skipped school or not. Based on the results

The research found insufficient proof to back the claim that children who frequently skip school are prone to engaging in criminal behavior. Therefore, it can be inferred that lack of literacy is not necessarily linked to engaging in criminal activities, despite common assumptions. It is crucial to remember that most children involved in legal issues come from economically disadvantaged families.

According to the 2023 Performance Report from the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR), a baseline inspection including 955 children was undertaken in March 2022, which indicated that:

- a. One hundred eighty-one children could not recognise letters, and one hundred eighteen children could not recognise one-digit numerals.
- b. Only 128 students aged 6 to 14 were capable of reading a grade 5 narrative.
- c. Only 301 students successfully performed basic division procedures.

Previous studies conducted globally have unequivocally demonstrated the connection between adolescent delinquent behaviour and academic success. This further implies that among many other contextual influences, the child's educational background, school experiences, and immediate neighbourhood have a direct impact on the issues associated with the delinquent behaviour of the child. Thus, it may be concluded that schools have a significant influence in the context of children's

delinquent behaviour. There is less likelihood that children who are treated well and supervised during their school years would grow up to engage in delinquent behaviour, but the opposite is also true.

In this connection, it might be added that youngsters who are hyperactive during school days and frequently defy their parents and instructors are frequently labelled "Bad Boys." This incorrect designation has a long-term effect on the children's academic performance. According to the "Labelling Approach," this misrecognition process is a "Negative Label" that negatively affects the children's self-concept and eventually leads to a self-fulfilling prophesy (Siegel, Larry J. (2000)).

The Commission has collaborated with the Directorate of Education, the Pratham Education Foundation, and the Department of Women and Child Development to assist the basic learning. Over the course of three months, they hope to have every child proficient in reading story-level materials and doing simple maths problems. In May, bi-monthly reviews were introduced to track progress. Significant progress was made in the most recent evaluation, which was carried out in January 2023: 34% of children acquired an advanced reading level, over 55% became proficient in division-level arithmetic, and the fraction of children who were unable to recognise numbers decreased from 12% to 3%.

By working with Feeding India by Zomato, the Commission expanded the Reading Campaign's reach and advanced the effort. Through this partnership, an Ed-Tech intervention was implemented with the goal of enhancing the educational experience for children between the ages of 10 and 18.

Through the use of apps, games, and videos, children can acquire reading and numeracy as part of the foundational literacy programs made possible by this EdTech Intervention, which is a component of the Educate India Initiative. Local schools can act as important hubs for interacting with the community and treating children's behavioural difficulties in a multicultural nation like India, particularly in places where juvenile offences are more common. One of the first steps could involve the government or District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) collaborating with schools to implement awareness and intervention programs. It is essential for schools to actively work toward reducing dropout rates, ensuring that every child remains in the education system.

This perspective highlights the significant role schools play in the early socialization of children. Schools can be instrumental in preventing the emergence of delinquent behavior by fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. Such an environment should be free from negative labeling or stereotyping, especially for children who may have struggled academically or behaviorally in the past. Providing this kind of support can greatly contribute to preventing children from engaging in unlawful activities and can serve as a strong preventive strategy against juvenile delinquency.

Given this responsibility, schools must adopt a proactive stance in strengthening students' self-esteem and psychological well-being. This includes not only offering emotional and academic support but also ensuring access to the necessary infrastructure and resources that encourage positive behavior and discourage delinquency.

A holistic school approach that promotes cognitive development and raises awareness about the consequences of violence, substance abuse, and criminal behavior is crucial.

Additionally, counseling services should be made available, particularly for children who are already struggling with behavioral issues, to help them reintegrate and recover.

It is also important to recognize that schools alone are not the root cause of juvenile offenses. Implementing the strategies mentioned above may not entirely eliminate the possibility of children coming into conflict with the law. However, the school's attitude and approach can significantly influence whether a child avoids or becomes entangled in the justice system.

Research consistently shows that children who face neglect, abuse, or exposure to domestic violence, or who lack proper family support, are more likely to develop problematic behavior. Since parents and close family members often serve as a child's first role models, their actions have a profound impact on a child's development. Dysfunctional family dynamics can directly contribute to the emergence of delinquent tendencies.

Figure 4.7 provides a visual comparison of the family backgrounds of children taken into custody in 2016, with Delhi represented in blue and the national statistics shown in orange. Interestingly, the data from Delhi mirrors national trends, providing insight into the broader family-related factors influencing juvenile behavior in India.

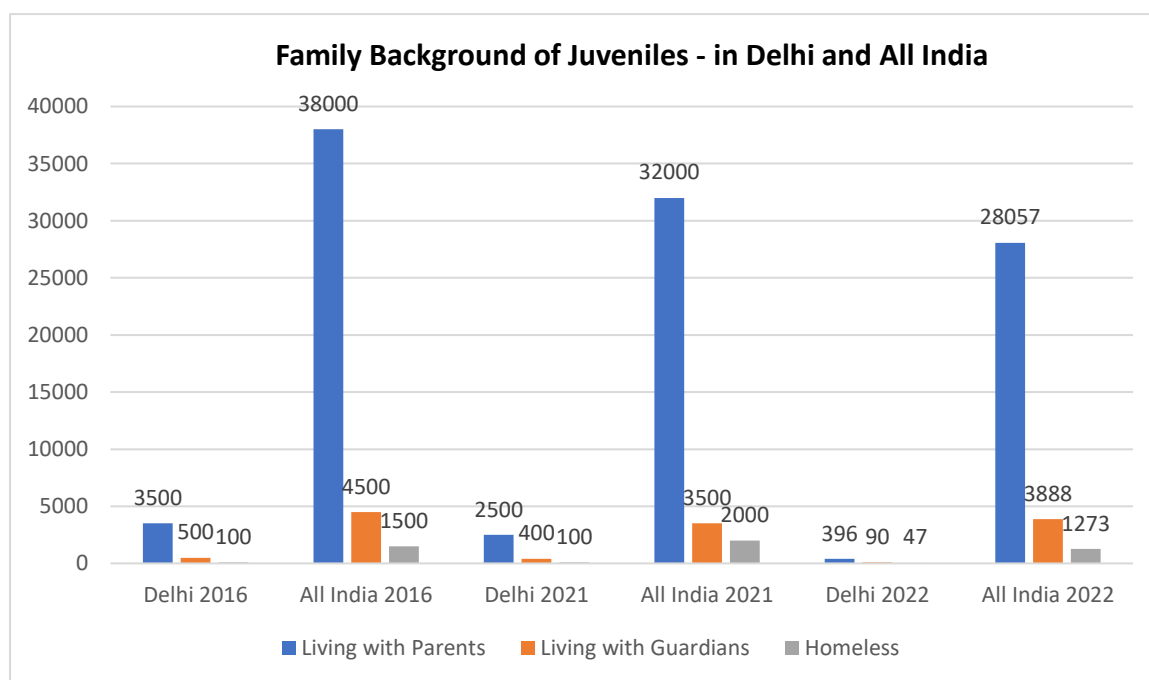


Fig- Family background of juveniles both in India and All-India [2016,2021,2022] NCRB data

Source: Prepared by the researcher

As per the above diagram, propensity for children to engage in criminal behaviour can be largely ascribed to their familial and environmental contexts, in addition to cognitive, physical, and emotional components. In 2016, as illustrated in Figure 4.5 (a), of the total 44,171 children jailed in India, 86.16% lived with their parents, 10.30% dwelt with guardians, and 3.54% were homeless. The research indicates that the prevailing belief that CCL do not reside with their parents can be refuted.

Moreover, Figure 4.7 indicates that of the total children apprehended throughout India, 4,550 were residing with their guardians rather than their parents. In Delhi, the proportion of such youngsters was 8.9%. The majority of youngsters that violate laws originate from environments with their parents. However, we must acknowledge that this data does not provide more clarification regarding the influence of family background beyond this variable. A survey conducted by DCPCR and NGO Butterfly in Delhi indicated that the majority of children in institutional care in the region come ‘single-parent households,’ ‘neglected family environments,’ ‘abusive family settings,’ or ‘homes with deviant influences’ must be taken into account. As a result, interpreting NCRB data on family background requires consideration of additional factors, including the overall socio-economic and relational context of the family.

The data in above figure pertains to all the children who were arrested in Delhi and India for a year. The data is inconclusive to state with certainty that CCLs coming from broken families, but it is suggested that it is a possibility. Data pertaining to family status is not maintained by NCRB. Although it can be said, that the children may come from instable family support. Another study by DCPCR and Butterflies states that, “Children at these institutes experienced several deprivations throughout their lives. The majority sprang from impoverished families who faced difficulties in achieving financial stability.

This challenge in life typically results in parents having minimal options for providing sufficient supervision and oversight for their children” As per the Report of DCPCR, when looking at their sample of children’s family background from within child care institutions for CCL, it was seen that According to the data, “14.2% of the children were not residing with their parents, while 23% were living with either a single parent or stepparents. In households with both parents, the demands of daily life and the pervasive work culture, including several jobs, hinder the parents' ability to offer sufficient supervision.

Inadequate parenting and supervision, stemming from ignorance, exacerbated the issue”. There are other factors too, which cannot be ignored to comprehend the family, social environment and its link to a child committing offence.

When trying to comprehend a child's delinquent actions within their family and social setting, it is vital to acknowledge the presence of other crucial elements. Lastly, as per the data gathered from all across India for Figure 4.5(a), 1560 children were found to be homeless in 2016, while the number increased to 2191 in 2021.

As shown in comparison with Figure 4.5(a), a significant 85% of juveniles in conflict with the law were found to be living with their parents. According to the NCRB report, “family background” refers to the living arrangements of these juveniles. While the majority resided with their parents, around 9% lived under the care of guardians, and roughly 6% were homeless.

This role becomes even more critical today, especially with the shifting dynamics of families in urban and semi-urban areas. Although families cannot control every influence in a child's environment, they still bear a key responsibility to provide a supportive and nurturing setting that discourages delinquent behavior and fosters healthy social development (Smithmyer et al., 2000).

From the time a child is born, the family serves as the foundation for teaching core values, shaping attitudes, and instilling positive behaviors—all of which contribute to the child's social growth. However, disruptions within the family, such as parental separation or conflict, can deeply affect a child's behavior and may contribute to tendencies toward delinquency. Thus, the influence of the family remains a fundamental factor in the overall development of a child's character and conduct.

In 2022, the Commission joined forces with the Directorate of Education to launch the Parents' Samvaad project. This initiative involved around 25,000 parent volunteers who help other parents by encouraging regular school attendance, promoting participation in parent-teacher meetings, and creating a positive and supportive environment for students. To make communication easier, the DCPCR set up a Helpline that allows parents and volunteers to stay in touch without worrying about phone expenses. Thanks to ongoing efforts with the Directorate of Education across Delhi's districts, more than 1,500 children who lost one or both parents during the COVID-19 pandemic have been enrolled in private schools under the EWS/DG and Freeship quotas.

The regional forum includes many different groups dedicated to child rights, such as:

- Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)
- Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs)
- Childline
- District Child Protection Units
- District Medical Superintendents
- Special Juvenile Police Units
- District Education Officers and Deputy Directors of Education
- Deputy Labour Commissioner from Labour Departments

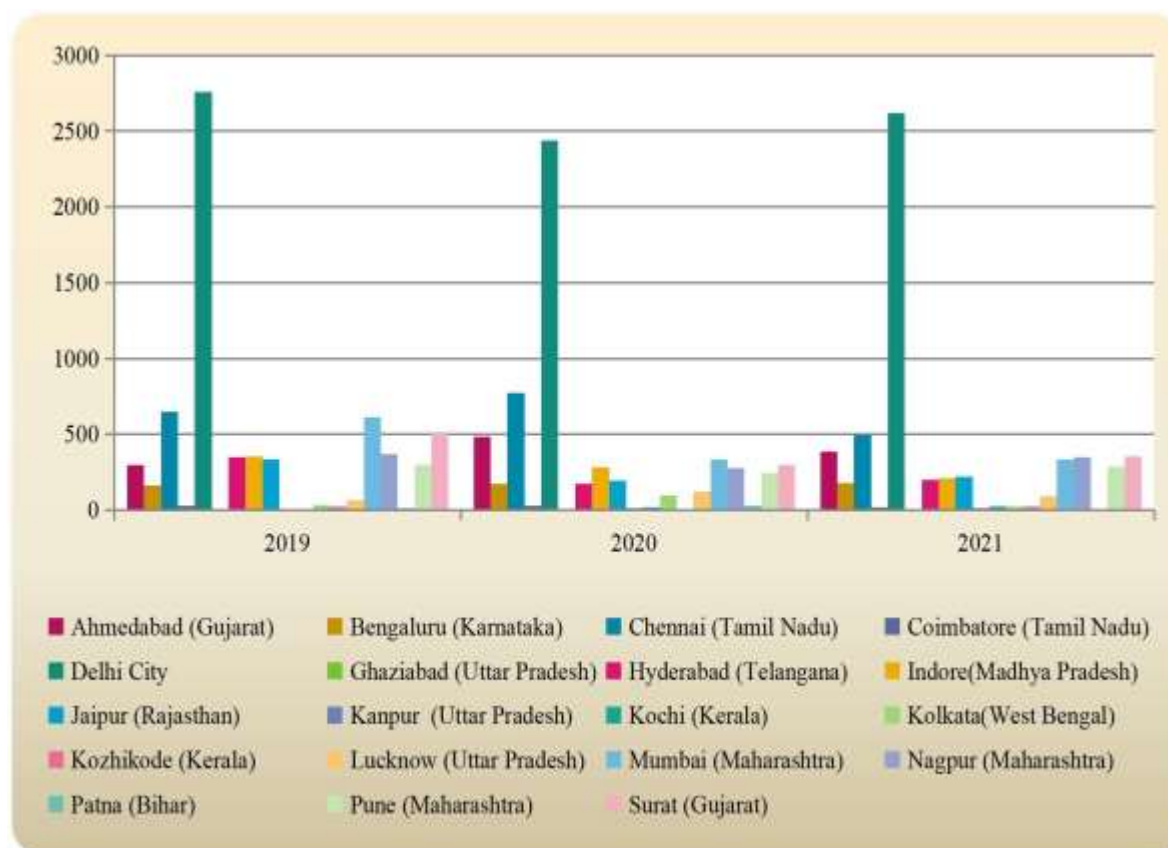


Fig: - Offences committed under IPC & SLL in Major Metropolitan cities (2019-2021) Source (NCRB Crimes in India 2021 and 2019)- <https://www.ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-year-wise.html?year=2021&keyword=>

The information on juvenile crimes under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and special/local laws in several Indian metropolitan cities is displayed in Figure 4.6. Ahmadabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Kochi, Kolkata, and Nagpur are among the cities listed. It is clear to see that most underage lawbreakers come from Delhi, with 2760 juveniles in 2019, 2436 in 2020, and 2618 in 2021. During these three years, it is particularly puzzling that nearly every major city in every state, except Kochi and West Bengal, reported a rise in crimes against children, with Delhi showing the highest increase in child-related crimes.

This is a photo that makes someone stop and think. The capital city of Delhi not only holds the title of being the state capital, but also stands out for its commendable initiatives and measures for CCL compared to other cities in India. Both the state of Delhi and the city itself serve as the capital. Simultaneously, there is a rising trend in the number of crimes committed by children. It cannot be stated with certainty the reason of the increasing offences by children in the State, but it may be attributable to many factors, viz., rising population; rising urbanization leading to increase in the urban slums wherein children are left without better social, parental, emotional supervision; cheap drug accessibility and unorganized increase in migrant population, lack of small community knowing each other (mostly seen in village system) can be many of the factors that may contribute towards the same. The figure displays the count of young offenders from Kochi: 10 in 2019, 20 in 2020, and 22 in

2021. This shows a rise compared to the past three years. The quantity of underage individuals involved in criminal activities varied from 36 in 2019 to 97 in 2020 and 25 in 2021, with Kolkata having the most similar proportion. While the figures in Kochi and Kolkata were lower than in major metropolitan areas, the trend of increasing numbers was still evident in these cities as well. This particular detail must be highlighted right here.

In Chennai, there were 647 juvenile offenses in 2019 and 773 in 2020, but decreased to 496 in 2021, ranking second highest in the nation after Delhi. Despite the fact that the recidivism rate or increase rate was not notably high in Mumbai, the total number of children engaged in criminal behavior was worrisome.

In Ahmedabad, a different urban area, there was a significant increase in child offenses from 298 in 2019 to 483 in 2020 and 386 in 2021. The number of child offences in Pune increased significantly, rising from 299 in 2019 to 243 the next year, and 288 in 2021, with children being the perpetrators. Nagpur, Chennai, and Bengaluru had fewer reported child offenses over the last three years compared to other cities, although there was a slight increase in numbers.

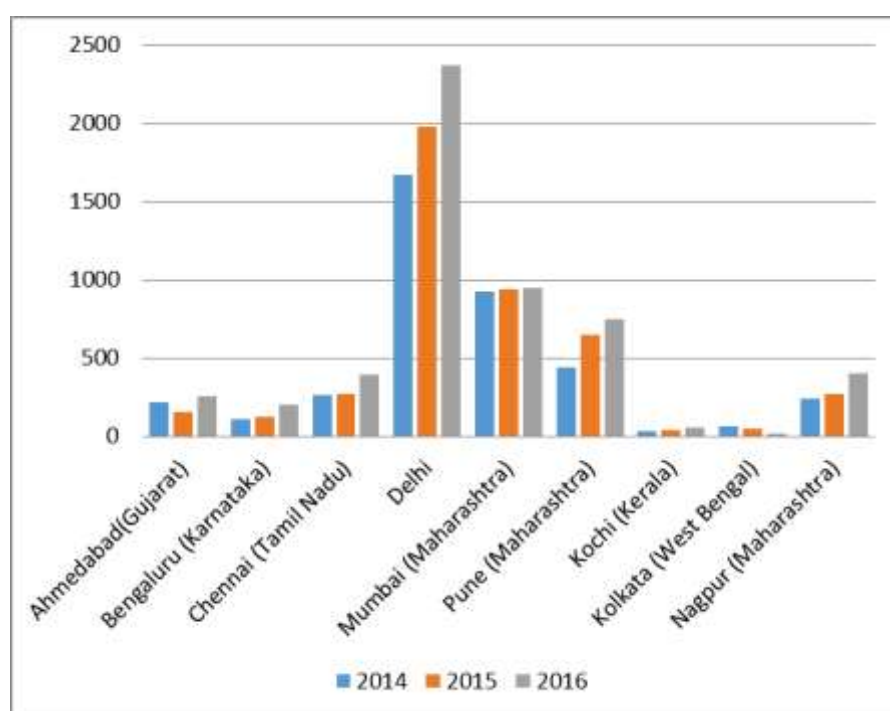


Fig Juvenile offences in Metropolitan Cities under IPC and SLL (2014-2016) – a comparative sketch

[Source: https://www.data.gov.in/search?title=Crime%20in%20India%20-%202014&type=resources&sortby=_score]

Following Delhi, Mumbai recorded the second-highest number of juvenile offences, with 926 cases reported in 2014. This figure saw a marginal rise to 938 in 2015 and 946 in 2016. Although the rate of repeat offences in Mumbai wasn't significantly high, the overall number of children involved in criminal activities remained a matter of concern. In contrast, Pune—a major metropolitan city—witnessed a sharper rise. Juvenile offences jumped from 437 cases in 2014 to 651 in 2015, and further increased to 749 in 2016, indicating a worrying trend. Meanwhile, other cities like Nagpur, Chennai, and Bengaluru

reported comparatively lower numbers of juvenile crimes. However, these cities too experienced a gradual rise in such incidents over the three-year period.

In continuation to Figure 4.1 which gave a comparative study of IPC crime in the sample State of Delhi for 2006 and 2016, Figure 4.7, provides a comparative study of whole India. This data is taken from two years with a ten year period gap to see if overall there has been a reduction trend in the number of offences being committed by children in India. The data further studies the crime committed by children as per their age group stratification. The data is taken with a caveat assumption that none of the two abovementioned years show any out of the ordinary or drastic hike or reduction in that specific year only and is true depiction of the gradual increase/decrease in offences being committed.

Colour scheme of blue depicts data of the year 2006 and colour scheme of orange depicts data of CCL from the year 2016.

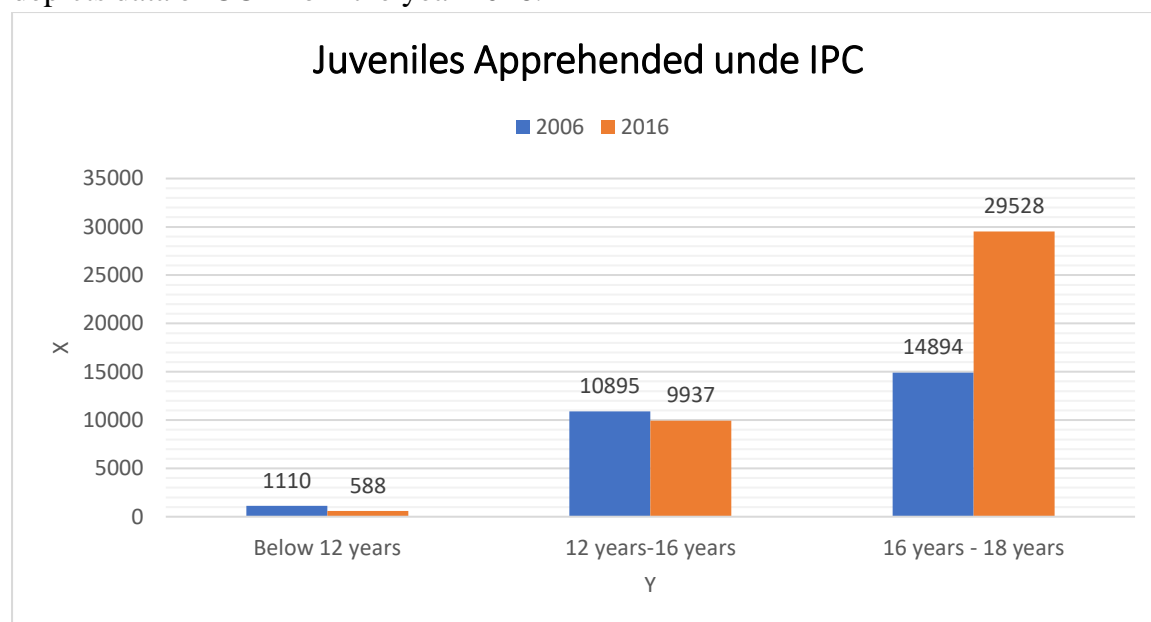


Fig 4.7: Juveniles apprehended under IPC – Comparative sketch between 2006 & 2016 [NCRB data]

Sorce- Prepared by the researcher

Figure 4.7 provides a visual comparison of the family backgrounds of children taken into custody in 2016, with Delhi represented in blue and the national statistics shown in orange

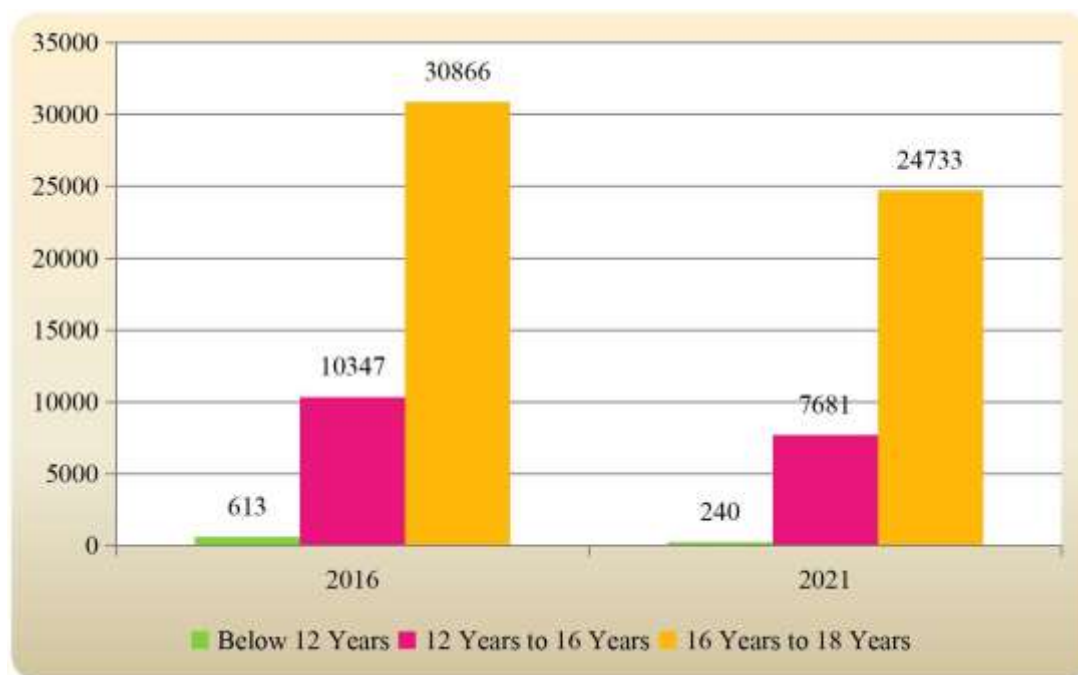


Fig: Comparing Juvenile apprehended under IPC in 2016 & 2021 [NCRB data] [Source: https://www.data.gov.in/search?title=Crime%20in%20India%20-%202014&type=resources&sortby=_score]

Figures 4.7 and 4.7(a) present a comparative analysis of juvenile crime statistics across a ten-year span, illustrating arrest trends for the years 2006, 2016, and 2021. The data reveal a notable decrease in the number of children apprehended in the younger age groups. Specifically, arrests of juveniles under the age of 12 declined from 1,110 in 2006 to 588 in 2016, while those in the 12–16 age bracket decreased from 10,895 to 9,937 over the same period.

However, this apparent downward trend does not extend to older adolescents. In fact, the 16–18-year age group exhibited a significant rise in arrests, with figures nearly doubling from 14,894 in 2006 to 29,528 in 2016. In 2006, juveniles in this age category constituted approximately 40.5% of the total apprehensions. By 2016, this proportion had increased dramatically to 73.72%, indicating a concerning shift in the age profile of juvenile offenders.

This surge in criminal involvement among older juveniles underscores the need for focused interventions. Given that individuals in the 16–18 age group are at a critical developmental stage, the increase in their engagement with the criminal justice system calls for urgent attention from policymakers, educators, and social service providers to implement preventive and rehabilitative strategies.

It shows the alarming state that the State is failing in its effort towards protecting the youth from the life of crime.

The information shown in Figure 4.7(a) prior demonstrates a discrepancy of five periods in the total amount of crimes committed by young people involved in criminal activities. The figure above shows the arrests made in 2016, followed by the arrests in the same year.

While there is a decline in the number of juveniles arrested in 2016 in the Age groups

'Below 12 years' (dropping from 613 to 240 in 2021) and 'between 12-16 years' (decreasing from 10347 to 7681 in 2021), the trend might not reflect the overall total accurately. From 2016 to 2021, the amount of teenagers aged 16 to 18 held in police custody decreased significantly, dropping from 30866 arrests in 2016 to a remarkable 24733 in 2021. Because nearly 40.50 percent of all children who were arrested in 2021 were between the ages of 16 and 18, this specific subgroup of children should receive special focus. Once more, 32654 juveniles in this age group were responsible for 73.72 percent of all arrests in 2016.

It is worrying that the number of adolescents between the ages of 16-18 being detained in India has nearly doubled during this time frame, which covers their crucial youth years. It is concerning that the government is not succeeding in safeguarding young people from a criminal lifestyle, indicating the government's failure.

Research indicates that adolescents are more susceptible to engaging in delinquent behavior compared to younger children, a trend that can be linked to the psychological and physiological transformations typical of this developmental stage. The onset of puberty often brings heightened emotional sensitivity, evolving identity, and emerging sexual awareness, all of which may contribute to risk-taking or impulsive actions. It is crucial to recognize, however, that not all instances of misconduct among youth signal a persistent pattern of criminal behavior. While some juveniles may violate legal or social norms, many do not become repeat offenders. In fact, numerous cases demonstrate that young individuals often reflect on their earlier transgressions and, with time and guidance, mature into responsible and law-abiding adults.

This understanding aligns with the principles outlined in the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. These guidelines emphasize that occasional delinquent behavior should not be seen as indicative of a lifelong tendency. Rather, such actions are often part of a broader developmental process, and with appropriate support systems in place, most juveniles exhibit marked behavioral improvement as they transition into adulthood. Despite this, statistical trends over the past decade and a half reveal a significant rise in juvenile crime—an estimated 65% increase. The year 2016 recorded the highest number of offences committed by juveniles during this period. Although subsequent years have shown a gradual decline, with annual reductions of approximately 6%, the earlier surge underscores the need for sustained preventive efforts, early intervention strategies, and comprehensive support systems tailored to adolescent development.

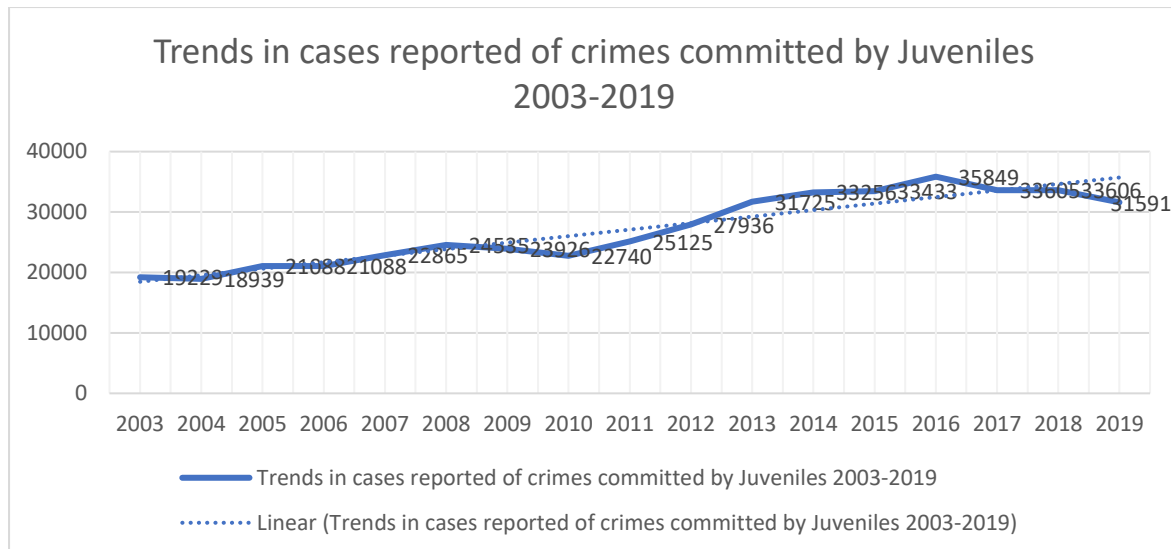


Fig : Comparing Juvenile apprehended under IPC in 2003-2019 [Source: NCRB report 2018]

Since 2014, the number of minors aged 12 to 16 years booked under the IPC and SLL has consistently declined. With the exception of 2016, the trend for individuals under 12 years of age exhibits a comparable pattern.

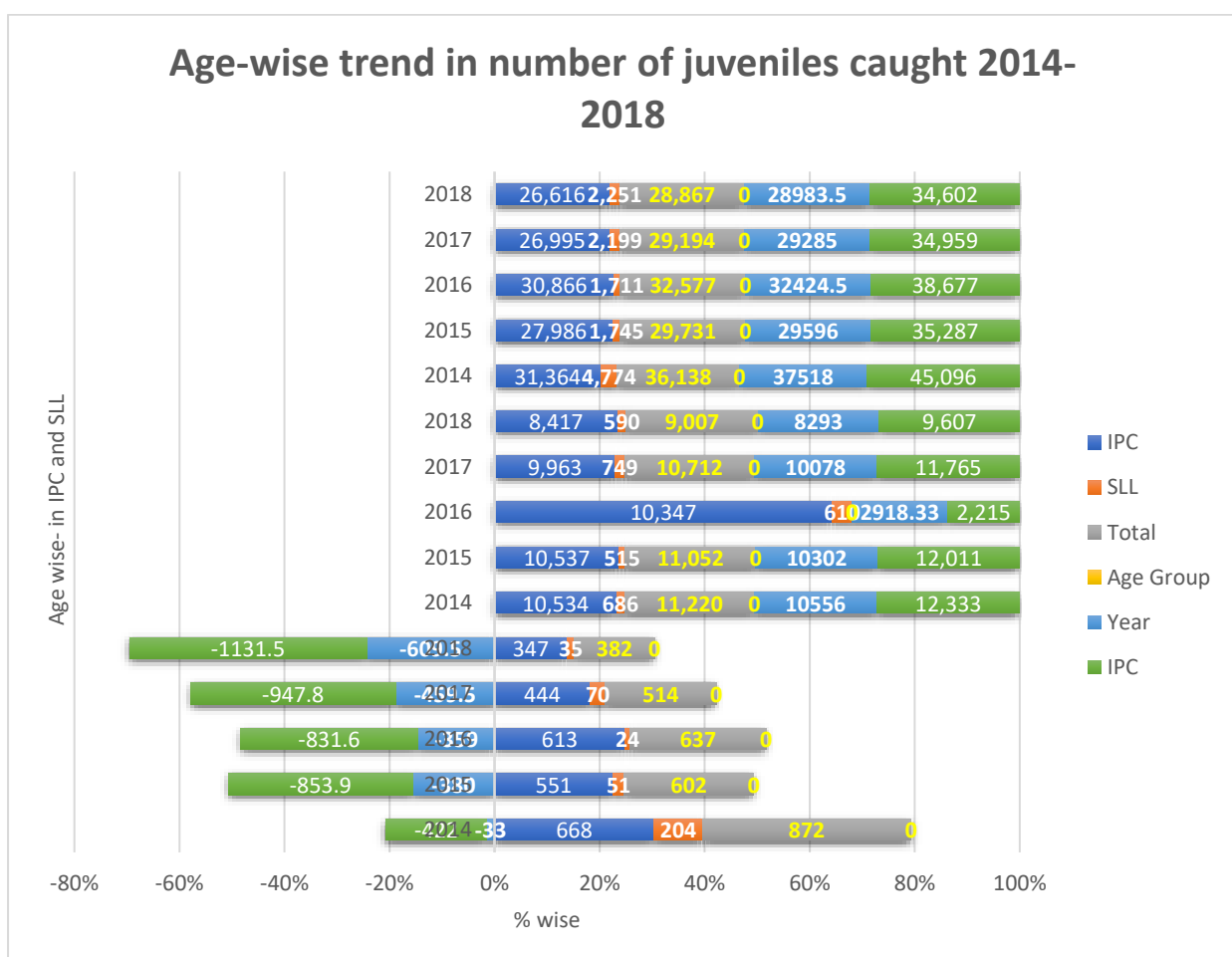


Fig : Comparison 2016 -2018- Age-wise Juvenile apprehended under IPC & SLL 201-2018 [NCRB Report- Crimes in India 2018]

Source- Prepared by researcher (2023)

For minors aged 16 to 18, the number charged with SLL offences has risen from 2016 to 2018, whereas those charged under IPC has declined by 13.8% since 2016. Before 2016, this figure exhibited a varied trend.

A potential factor contributing to the decline in cases among the 16 to 18-year age group may be the implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, enacted in 2015 and effective from 2016. The Act was enacted in response to the Nirbhaya case, aiming to dissuade juveniles from doing similar offences. This statute has a provision allowing the court to adjudicate a kid over 16 years of age as an adult, following a preliminary evaluation, in instances of unacceptable offences.

Considering the aforementioned factors, it is imperative to recognize that children who commit offences for the first time, if provided with timely and appropriate rehabilitative support, possess significant potential to reintegrate into society as responsible and constructive individuals. However, prevailing practices within certain child care institutions—such as Observation Homes (OHs) and Special Homes (SHs)—often deviate from this rehabilitative ideal.

One particularly troubling practice is the use of solitary confinement within juvenile facilities, which mirrors punitive approaches typically reserved for adults. Existing empirical research has consistently demonstrated the detrimental psychological and behavioural effects of such isolation on children in conflict with the law (CCLs). Solitary confinement can severely hinder rehabilitation, especially for those with pre-existing mental health conditions, by exacerbating emotional distress, promoting social withdrawal, and impeding healthy interpersonal development.

The **World Health Report (2018)** explicitly addresses the mental health risks associated with placing juveniles in solitary confinement. The report highlights instances where such conditions have led to severe psychological deterioration, including self-harm and attempted suicide, underscoring the profound impact of isolation on young individuals' mental well-being. These findings are corroborated by research from the **Advancing Science Serving Society (2014)**, which also advocates against the use of solitary confinement for juveniles.

In response to these concerns, the **World Health Report** recommends alternatives that prioritize psychosocial support and developmental growth. It emphasizes the urgent need to increase the number of trained mental health professionals and counselors in juvenile care institutions. Furthermore, institutions should implement structured, rehabilitative programs that engage children in constructive activities. This includes providing access to formal education and vocational training, both of which play a critical role in facilitating meaningful reintegration into society and reducing recidivism in the long term.

CONCLUSION

The current chapter aims to complement that foundation by presenting an empirical examination of juvenile delinquency, identifying key contributing factors that influence deviant behaviour among minors.

A critical component of understanding juvenile offending lies in examining variables such as educational attainment, family environment, and the specific age at which the child enters into conflict with legal systems. Insight into these dimensions is instrumental in developing tailored interventions that foster meaningful rehabilitation and reintegration.

As legal citizens of India, children—including those in conflict with the law—are entitled to all constitutional rights and protections necessary for their holistic development. These include the right to education, health, and a safe, supportive environment free from discrimination. The Indian Constitution explicitly safeguards children's interests through provisions such as Article 15(3), which enables affirmative action; Article 24, prohibiting child labor; and Articles 39(e) and 39(f), which direct the state to prevent child abuse and ensure opportunities for growth in a healthy setting. Article 47 reinforces this mandate by emphasizing nutrition and health, while Article 51A entrusts parents and guardians with the duty to provide educational opportunities. These constitutional protections underscore that children in conflict with the law (CCL) are no exception and must be afforded the same developmental opportunities as their peers.

Research endorses the premise that the family constitutes the optimal setting for a child's development, although it also warns that this environment must be supportive and devoid of abuse or neglect. To avert recidivism, attention must broaden beyond youth already in legal conflict to those in transitional stages displaying early indicators of maladjustment. Early detection and intervention—particularly at the community and school levels—can play a crucial role in identifying at-risk youth before they enter the juvenile justice system. Behavioural disruptions in educational settings or disruptive conduct in public areas should be addressed beforehand, even if they have not yet escalated to criminal activity.

Equally important is the distinction between children in need of care and protection and those who offend. Often, these categories overlap, and children who require care and support also end up in conflict with the law. Data presented in this chapter reveals a concerning upward trend in juvenile offences, indicating a broader societal issue. Such crimes not only endanger community safety but also jeopardize the futures of vulnerable children who are themselves victims of adverse environments. Factors such as urban overcrowding, breakdown of community networks, proliferation of slums, exposure to illegal activities, easy access to violent or inappropriate content online, substance abuse, and gambling have all contributed to this phenomenon.

The central objective of this chapter has been to critically analyse the causes of juvenile delinquency and assess the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation strategies. The findings suggest that successful rehabilitation must be individualized, incorporating professional counselling and guided reintegration efforts. While several states have initiated commendable practices such as early intervention and preventive frameworks, these

measures often lack a uniform structure or large-scale implementation. Isolated instances of success exist but are not reflective of a systemic approach.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, along with the Model Rules of 2016, provides a legislative framework for structured rehabilitation and reintegration, including provisions for post-rehabilitation follow-up. Achieving this necessitates comprehensive collaboration between communities and the government.

Given the multifaceted causes behind juvenile delinquency—ranging from environmental to social and individual determinants—rehabilitation and reintegration programs must reflect this complexity. These initiatives should include access to quality education, vocational training aligned with market needs, individualized care plans, robust substance abuse treatment programs, and relapse prevention strategies. Moreover, incorporating school-based and community-based mentorship, parental education, psychological support for families, and long-term counselling can significantly enhance reintegration outcomes and help young individuals reclaim their lives as productive members of society.