



Recidivism Among Juvenile Offenders: Causes And Prevention

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Abstract: This study investigates the psychological, criminological, and socio-economic causes of repeated juvenile offenses and evaluates the effectiveness of current preventive and rehabilitative strategies. Drawing from primary data collected through interviews and observations at juvenile institutions and secondary data such as NCRB reports, this empirical research applies statistical methods to analyze trends in reoffending. It explores the contrasting models of rehabilitation and punishment, and further conducts a comparative analysis of recidivism prevention practices in countries like Norway, Japan, Brazil, and the U.S. The study also critically examines the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the role of Juvenile Justice Boards in addressing repeat offenses. It also studies about whether the inadequate post-release support, poor family environments, lack of education, or social stigma significantly contribute to recidivism. This paper highlights the urgent need for a child-centered justice system that balances accountability with compassion and social reintegration.

Index Terms - Juvenile justice, recidivism, reoffending, rehabilitation, socio-economic factors, psychological theories, legal framework, India, empirical study, National Crime Records bureau (NCRB), Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), juvenile homes, community reintegration, aftercare, punitive vs rehabilitative.

I. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency, especially when young offenders repeat crimes, is a serious issue in India. This tendency to reoffend after undergoing legal action is called **recidivism**. Despite several changes in law; especially the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, many young offenders continue to return to crime. This raises questions about whether our system is truly helping these children reform and return to society in a better way. The juvenile justice system is based on the idea that children can change and be rehabilitated more easily than adults. However, in reality, this does not always happen. Many young offenders face the same problems after release that led them to crime in the first place. These problems include poverty, broken families, peer pressure, and lack of education or support. As a result, they fall back into crime. Recidivism is more than just an individual problem. It shows how well or poorly our institutions, families, and communities support these children. When a child reoffends, it means that there was a failure in helping them adjust and improve after their first crime. This failure could come from poor living conditions, lack of schooling, unemployment, or simply the lack of someone to guide them.

Experts from psychology and criminology explain this in several ways. Theories like Freud's psychoanalytic theory or Bandura's social learning theory show that children learn from their surroundings. If they grow up in violent or criminal environments, they are likely to copy those behaviors. Other theories, like labeling theory, suggest that once a child is called a "criminal," society starts treating them that way, making it harder for them to change.¹

Data from India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that most juvenile offenders come from poor or unstable backgrounds. Many live without proper parental care, go to poor schools, and suffer from emotional stress. When these children are sent back to the same environment after legal intervention, they often return to crime. India's law tries to fix this through the 2015 Juvenile Justice Act. It set up Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, and Children's homes for rehabilitation. It also allows juveniles between 16 and 18 to be tried as adults in serious cases. However, the law is not applied as it is, because of debate between rehabilitation and punishment centred to juvenile justice, with rehabilitation aiming to reform and reintegrate young offenders through education and therapy, while the punitive approach focuses on deterrence and accountability through penalties. In most of the case, punitive approaches are been implemented rather than rehabilitation. Some countries like Norway and Japan focus more on **rehabilitation** than punishment. They offer counseling, education, job training, and family support to help juveniles reform. India can learn from these models. This study aims to understand the reasons behind juvenile recidivism, analyze the legal system's strengths and weaknesses, and offer practical solutions. The goal is to ensure that children who break the law get a real chance to rebuild their lives, not just face punishment. Only then can the justice system become a true tool for social change and child development.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and analyze the psychological, social, and economic factors contributing to juvenile recidivism in India.
2. To critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 in addressing reoffending behavior.
3. To examine the roles of family, educational institutions, and community support in the reintegration of juvenile offenders.
4. To conduct a comparative analysis of international models addressing juvenile recidivism, with a focus on countries like Norway, Japan, and Brazil.
5. To propose legal, institutional, and social strategies aimed at reducing juvenile reoffending and improving rehabilitation outcomes.

III. HYPOTHESIS

"Juvenile offenders who do not receive proper rehabilitation, education, and social support are more likely to re-offend."

Null Hypothesis: Education level, family/ social support, rehabilitation and recidivism are independent.

Alternate Hypothesis: Education level, family/ social support, rehabilitation and recidivism are not independent. i.e. These variables are dependent and inter-related with recidivism.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an empirical research methodology integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively examine juvenile recidivism.

The qualitative methods are *primary data* which was collected through interviews, surveys, and case studies involving children in conflict with law, conducted in Children homes /Juvenile homes, rehabilitation centres, and Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs). These interactions provided firsthand insights into the socio-economic and psychological conditions influencing reoffending behavior. The quantitative analysis involved the use of statistical tools such as the *Chi-square test*, *Z-test*, and *correlation analysis* in yearly basis. These were applied to identify significant relationships between variables like access to education, vocational training, counselling, family support, and the likelihood of reoffending. So, the *Sources of Data* are the Primary Data which are surveys and interviews conducted in observation homes, juvenile courts, and with rehabilitation officers and Secondary Data which includes the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, relevant case laws, NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) statistics on juvenile crimes, and international studies on recidivism.

This mixed-method approach ensures a holistic understanding of the causes of juvenile recidivism and evaluates the effectiveness of the current legal and institutional rehabilitation mechanisms. The findings aim to support evidence-based recommendations for reforming juvenile justice practices in India.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Juvenile recidivism, or the tendency of young offenders to commit crimes again after being caught once, is a serious concern in India. It shows that the system is not always successful in changing the behavior of young offenders. Even though there are laws and programs meant to help reform these children, many of them fall back into crime. Experts say this happens due to a mix of psychological, social, and economic reasons. **Psychological theories**, like Freud's *psychoanalytic theory* (1923)², explain that when children do not get love or guidance, they may act out and not know right from wrong. The part of their mind that understands morality does not fully develop, and this can lead to repeated bad behavior.

Behavioral theory (1953)³, explained by B.F. Skinner, says that children who are rewarded for doing wrong things like gaining money or respect through crime are more likely to repeat crimes. If punishments are weak or if the system does not help them improve, they are not scared of the consequences. Similarly, *cognitive development theory* (1958)⁴ by Piaget and Kohlberg says some children do not grow up with a strong sense of right and wrong. They may stay in an early stage of moral thinking, where they only care about avoiding punishment or getting rewards, not about laws or how others feel.

Another important theory is Bandura's *social learning theory* (1977)⁵. This suggests that children learn by watching others. If they see crime happening around them, by family members, neighbours, or peers; they think it is normal. In many areas of India, juveniles are influenced by gangs or friends who commit crimes. Even after going through correctional homes, they go back to the same environment and start offending again.

Criminological theories also explain why juveniles repeat crimes. *Strain theory* (1938) by Robert Merton says that when young people are expected to succeed but do not have access to good education or jobs, they feel frustrated. This stress or "strain" pushes them toward illegal ways to achieve success. This is common in poor families where the children do not have many options. *Labeling theory* (1963) by Howard Becker says that once a child is called a "criminal," society treats them that way. This label sticks, making it hard for the child to change. Even after being reformed, society's rejection pushes them back into crime.

Routine activity theory (1979) says crime happens when three things come together: someone willing to commit a crime, an easy target, and no one to stop it. In many poor areas, children are left unsupervised and exposed to opportunities for crime. *Control theory* (1969) by Travis Hirschi adds that children with strong family, school, or community connections are less likely to commit crimes. But in India, many juveniles come from broken families or drop out of school. Without these connections, they feel no reason to follow the rules.

Another important idea is *subculture theory* (1955) by Albert Cohen, which says that some groups of children form their own rules that go against what society teaches. In these subcultures like street gang crime is normal and even encouraged. For many children, especially those living on the streets or in poor areas, crime becomes a way of life.

Besides psychological and criminological reasons, many **social and economic factors** also push children into crime again. *Family factors* plays a key role. Children raised in violent or criminal households may learn that crime is acceptable. If they are abused or neglected at home, they may become angry, scared, or emotionally unstable. If they go back to the same home after being released from a juvenile home, they often reoffend. Parents who are either too harsh or too soft may not guide their children properly. Constant family fights, separation, or death of parents can also make children feel lonely or unwanted, which increases the chance of committing crimes again.

Education also affects juvenile recidivism. Many children who offend once already have problems in school, like failing exams, not feeling connected to teachers, or skipping school. When they leave school early or

drop out, they do not have skills for doing legal jobs. This makes it more likely that they will return to illegal activities for money or recognition.

Peer pressure is another strong factor. Teenagers are often influenced by their friends. If their friends are involved in crime, they may feel the need to join in to gain respect or feel accepted. Joining gangs can give them a sense of belonging, especially if their home life is troubled. But gangs often encourage violence and illegal behavior. Without proper support, it becomes very hard for children to break away from such groups.

Poverty is one of the biggest reasons for repeated juvenile crime. When children do not have food, clothing, or shelter, they may steal just to survive. Even after being caught once, if nothing improves in their living conditions, they continue breaking the law. Many of these children also struggle to find work because they lack education or experience, and employers often do not want to hire former offenders. With no way to earn money legally, they may feel that returning to crime is the only option.

Community environment plays a big role too. Children living in areas with high crime, drug use, and weak policing often grow up thinking that crime is normal. They may not have positive role models like teachers or mentors, and they often copy the behavior of older criminals in their area. If there are no programs or adults to guide them, they repeat the same mistakes. *Emotional stress* also adds to the problem. Children facing constant hardship may suffer from depression, anxiety, or anger. Without access to mental health services, they cannot cope in healthy ways, and crime becomes an outlet for their pain or frustration.

Many children home in India do provide education, counselling, and vocational training during the period of confinement. Despite these efforts, the question remains: why do many juveniles reoffend after their release? While rehabilitation programs exist within institutions, *aftercare support* provided once juveniles return to society. In many cases, released juveniles are difficult to monitor, and to be tracked, they often fall back into criminal activities again. A major challenge is the *social stigma* attached to juvenile offenders. Society often views them with suspicion, and this judgmental attitude creates barriers to reintegration. Schools may refuse to re-enrol them, and employers are often unwilling to provide job opportunities. This rejection fosters feelings of isolation, shame, and hopelessness, which in turn push many of these young individuals back toward crime.

In some states like **Kerala**, positive steps have been taken to address this gap. The **KAVAL Program**, initiated by the State Government in collaboration with NGOs and the Social Justice Department, provides structured aftercare services. These include **job placement assistance, counselling, family reintegration, and mentorship**. Such models are crucial in helping juveniles rebuild their lives after release and reduce the chances of reoffending. However, one challenge remains: **some children who are released cannot be tracked effectively by KAVAL officials**, which limits the impact of the program.

In India, the justice system often struggles between two competing approaches: **rehabilitation** and **punishment**. The *rehabilitation approach* focuses on helping children change through counselling, education, and emotional support. It sees them as capable of reform. The *punitive approach*⁶, on the other hand, focuses on strict penalties to deter crime and ensure justice for victims, emphasizing consequences over change. While both approaches have their place, many experts agree that young offenders benefit more from rehabilitation, as they are still developing and can be guided onto the right path. In the punitive system, sometimes a *monetary fine is imposed*, which may not be meaningful or helpful for children. In fact, such punishments may push them further into crime instead of encouraging behavioral change.

Countries like Norway and Japan use mostly rehabilitative models. They provide education, job training, therapy, and strong family support to juvenile offenders. As a result, they have much lower rates of repeat offenses. India can learn from these systems and create a justice model that truly helps children rebuild their lives, instead of simply punishing them. By focusing more on *reform and reintegration* and by addressing the social, emotional, and economic challenges that juveniles face, India can reduce recidivism and help create a safer and more just society⁷.

VI. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015⁸, is a major law in India aimed at addressing the needs of children who commit crimes or need care and protection. It replaced the earlier 2000 Act and came into force on January 1, 2016, mainly after public anger over the involvement of a minor in the *2012 Nirbhaya case*. The previous law only allowed a maximum of three years in a juvenile home as punishment for any child under 18, even for serious crimes. People felt this was too lenient for heinous offences. The public outcry led to fast-tracked legal reforms, resulting in the 2015 Act. The JJ Act, 2015 focuses on rehabilitation over punishment and aims to treat children in a child-friendly way, ensuring their care, development, and social reintegration. It defines a *child* as anyone below 18 years and introduces new terms like “*orphaned*,” “*abandoned*,” and “*surrendered*” children. It classifies offences by juveniles into three types: *petty*, *serious*, and *heinous*, depending on the punishment the crime carries.

A big change in the law is that children aged 16 to 18 can be tried as adults for heinous crimes. But before this happens, the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) must first assess the child’s mental state and understanding of the crime. If the child is found to have acted like an adult, the case is sent to the Children’s Court for trial. Even then, the court must maintain a child-friendly atmosphere. In the recent case law in **2022 Jubilee Hills gang Rape Incident**⁹, also questions about the implementation of juvenile justice principles in circumstances involving serious criminal offences. Further this case also questions the rehabilitation aspect for heinous crimes by juveniles with significant mens rea. If the child reforms during custody and turns 21, the court may release them on probation. The Act also mandates the creation of *Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)* and *Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)* in every district. These bodies ensure that children are treated fairly, are given rehabilitation opportunities, and are protected from exploitation. JJBs deal with children in conflict with law, whereas CWCs handle children in need of care and protection. The law promotes a participatory model, where *families, communities, NGOs, and the government share responsibility in protecting children*. It emphasizes the role of families in the emotional and mental development of children and encourages the involvement of *community leaders, teachers, and volunteers* in the child’s rehabilitation. Volunteers are also allowed to work in child care institutions to help children stay connected to society. *Special Homes, Observation Homes, and Places of Safety* are institutions defined in the Act where children are sent based on the nature of the offence and their condition. These homes must provide education, counselling and skill training to help juveniles reform.¹⁰

Children aged 16–18 who are tried as adults are not sent to regular prisons immediately. They are kept in a Place of Safety until they turn 21. After that, the court decides whether they should be released or sent to a regular prison. Every child gets an Individual Care Plan (ICP), and officials like probation officers or social workers must regularly monitor the child’s progress and report to the Children’s Court.

The Act also covers adoption and includes new rules to make the process smoother and more transparent. The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been made a statutory body, and the Act includes international standards like those in the Hague Convention. The law clearly lays down who can adopt and how adoption should be handled, both in India and for foreigners. Foster care is also introduced, allowing families to care for orphaned or abandoned children for a limited time. These families are given financial help and are monitored by the government.

Another key feature is “*Aftercare*”, which provides support for children aged 18 to 21 who leave juvenile institutions. This includes financial aid, job help, and counselling so they can rejoin society successfully. The Act adds several new offences related to children that were not clearly covered earlier. These include corporal punishment in child care homes, sale or procurement of children for illegal purposes, using children in terrorism, and giving harmful substances like alcohol or drugs to children. Giving such substances to a child can lead to up to *seven years in jail and a heavy fine*. The Act strictly prohibits the sale of tobacco products to children, especially those aged 16 to 18. A key strength of the JJ Act, 2015, is its strong focus on child safety, reform, and community involvement. However, it has also faced criticism. One of the major criticisms is about trying juveniles as adults.

Some experts believe that children’s brains are not fully developed, and they cannot always understand the full consequences of their actions. They argue that punishing them like adults goes against the aim of reform and violates their rights under Article 14 of the Constitution and international conventions like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging Section 15 of the Act, which allows trying juveniles as adults. The petition argues that this is

unfair and against the principle of equality, and that it ignores scientific studies showing that teenagers are still developing emotionally and mentally. To improve implementation, the Act also makes it mandatory for everyone working with children including judges, social workers, and police to undergo training so they understand how to deal with children in a sensitive and supportive manner. So, the JJ Act, 2015 is a detailed and comprehensive law that covers every aspect of child protection from dealing with juvenile crimes to ensuring proper rehabilitation, adoption, foster care, and aftercare. It tries to balance the need for justice with the goal of giving every child a second chance at life.

VII. COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH RECIDIVISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Norway has successfully reduced recidivism by shifting its criminal justice approach from punishment to rehabilitation. In the 1990s, about 70% of adults released from prison in Norway were reoffended within two years. Realizing that harsh punishment was not effective, the country reformed its prison system to focus on humane treatment, education, and social reintegration. Prisons like Halden and Bastoy offer clean environments, personal rooms, vocational training, and regular family visits. Life sentences were abolished, and most sentences are short. Prison staff act as mentors, and prisoners retain basic rights like education and voting. As a result, Norway's adult recidivism rate dropped to around 20% within two years. The juvenile justice system follows the same rehabilitative model. Children under 15 are not prosecuted but are supported by child welfare services. For juveniles aged 15 to 18, imprisonment is rarely used. Instead, they receive counseling, education, community service, and participate in youth contracts. In serious cases, they are placed in youth units that focus on therapy and life skills. Restorative justice practices and Multisystemic Therapy (MST)¹¹ help address the root causes of behavior. A study showed only 5.39% of MST participants had criminal records, proving the success of Norway's model. This approach has made Norway one of the countries with the lowest recidivism rates in the world. Young offenders in Norway who go through educational, therapeutic, and restorative programs like Multisystemic Therapy (MST) are much less likely to reoffend compared to those in traditional punishment systems. MST helps keep youth at home, in school, and away from crime. Most participants complete the program and lead productive, crime-free lives. While 64% of boys aged 15–17 charged in 2010 reoffended within five years, a 10-year study of 4,103 MST participants showed only 5.39% had a criminal record, proving the success of Norway's rehabilitative approach. Below Figure 1 shows the comparative graph on recidivism rates for adults and Juvenile in Norway in past 14 years.¹²

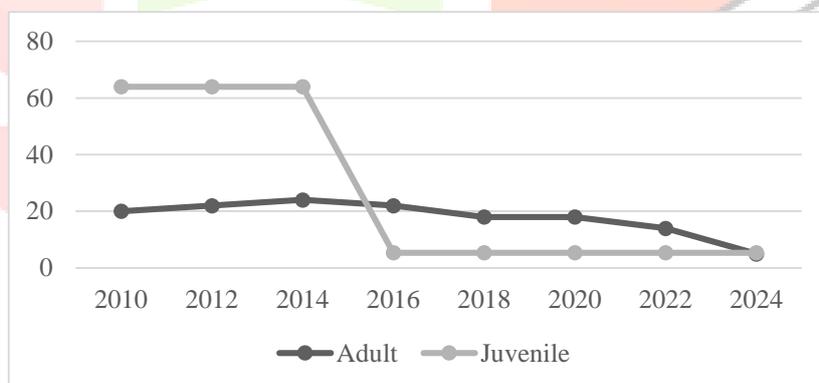


Fig.1- Recidivism Rates in Norway

In **North Dakota** on 2012, over 36% of adults went back to prison within three years of release. By 2014, it rose to 38%. To fix this, the state introduced re-entry programs that focus on jobs, education, mental health, and addiction help. This worked well—recidivism dropped to 22.8% in 2015 and just 13% by 2020. Programs like the F5 Project helped former prisoners with housing, employment, and treatment. Probation and parole officers now guide people instead of just punishing them. These changes have helped many people restart their lives, although some challenges remain. Around 24.5% of juveniles in North Dakota reoffend after first contact with the system. Unlike adults, the system focuses on support, not punishment. Community-based programs and therapies like Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Multisystemic Therapy (MST), and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) help kids and their families solve problems and improve behavior. Staying in school and getting mental health care also helps reduce repeat crimes. Even with this support, kids from poor or rural backgrounds or with serious mental health issues are still at higher risk. From 2012 to 2020, drug abuse was the top issue among juvenile crimes—peaking at 62.4% in 2016 and dropping to 44.3% by 2020. Weapon-related crimes were lower, starting at 37% in 2012 and decreasing to

27% by 2020. North Dakota continues to invest in therapy, education, and family support to reduce juvenile reoffending. The below Figure 2 shows the comparative graph on recidivism rates for adults and Juvenile in North Dakota in between 2012 – 2020.¹³

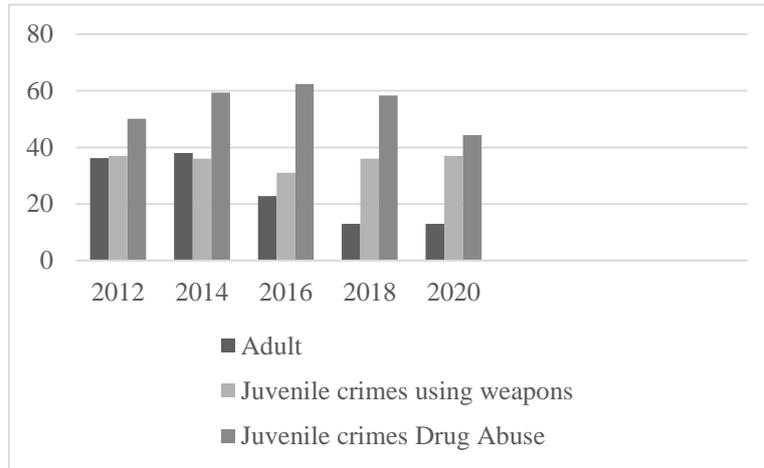


Fig.2 - Recidivism Rates in North Dakota¹⁴

Brazil has serious problems with juvenile crime, mainly because of poverty, drug abuse, and lack of education or job opportunities. In 1990, Brazil passed a law (Child and Adolescent Act) to treat young offenders more fairly and help them get better. But many juveniles still end up committing crimes again. Violence is a big problem—many young people are involved in gangs and drug trafficking. Studies show that a large number of youths die from violence, especially those aged 15 to 19. Once involved in crime, it is hard for them to stop. Recidivism rates (repeating crimes) are high, between 30% and 50%, depending on the area. This is because there isn't enough support after juveniles are released. Many programs for rehabilitation, mental health, or job training are missing or poorly funded. Families, schools, and communities also lack the tools to guide youth away from crime. Some people want harsher punishments for young offenders, but this often makes things worse. Harsh treatment without support leads to more crime, not less. To fix this, Brazil is trying new ideas; more community-based programs, volunteer probation officers, job training, and better cooperation between schools, courts, and health services. NGOs and faith groups are helping too, offering support, rehab, and peacebuilding programs. Public awareness to reduce stigma and support youth is also important.¹⁵ A graph below Figure 3 shows that homicides among youth are slowly decreasing, meaning that some of these efforts may be starting to work.

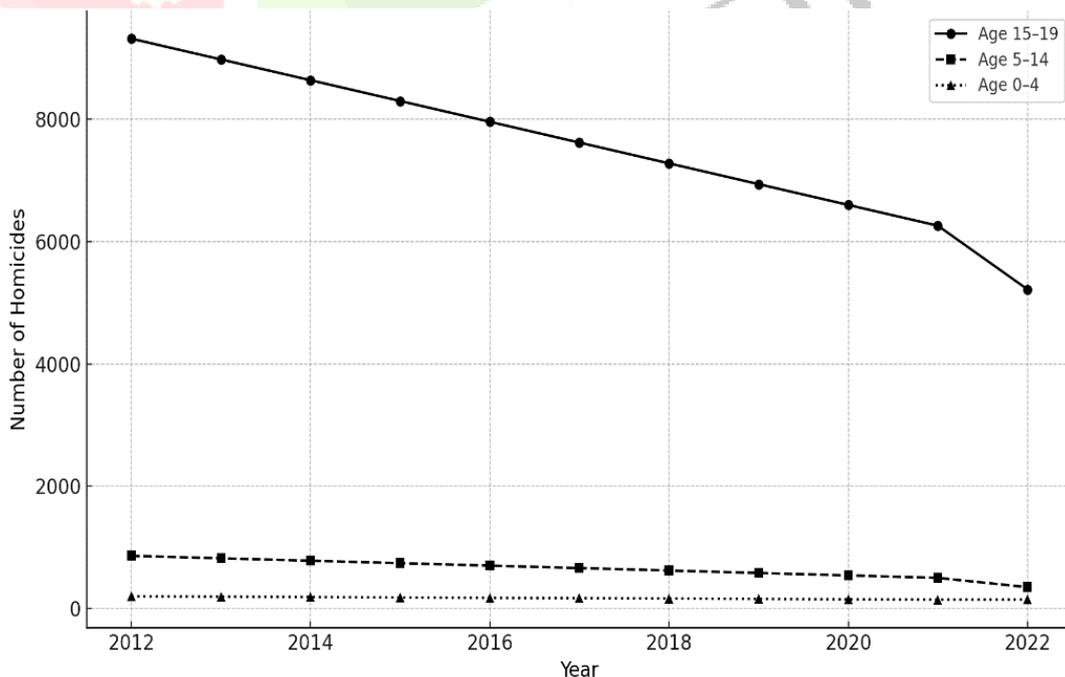


Fig.3 - Juvenile Homicide Rate in Brazil

France has a strong juvenile justice system that focuses more on helping young offenders through education and support rather than just punishment. However, juvenile crime and repeat offenses are still big problems. Most crimes committed by youth include theft, drug use, vandalism, and sometimes violence or gang activity. These often happen in poor neighborhood where kids face tough lives, poor schooling, and few job options. Around 40% to 60% of juveniles reoffend within two years of release. This is mostly because they do not get enough support after leaving the system. Many do not get help to return to school, find work, or get mental health care. Some come from troubled families, lack good role models, and are influenced by bad peer groups. Also, locking up juveniles in prison-like settings often makes things worse. To solve this, France passed a Juvenile Justice Code in 2021 to make the system faster and more focused on rehabilitation. Youth judges and special detention centers offer education and support. The government also works with NGOs to give therapy, legal aid, job training, and housing help. But these programs often lack enough money and staff. A 2016 study showed that young people of 10–24 year make up a large portion of crime cases. The most common offenses are theft, drugs, and violence. Punishment becomes stricter after age 18, with fewer support-based options and more prison sentences.

To reduce recidivism, experts suggest: helping youth with housing, jobs, and mentors after release, involving families in rehabilitation, providing mental health and addiction treatment, getting communities, schools, and businesses involved in support, creating safe centers with tutoring and counseling, and also regularly checking which programs work best. In general, while France has a good legal system, it still needs better support and care after release to help youth stay out of crime. More teamwork between families, schools, and communities can make a big difference.

Japan has built a unique and successful system to help juvenile offenders reintegrate into society, focusing more on rehabilitation than punishment. In recent years, a high number of crimes have been committed by repeat offenders. About 58.3% of newly imprisoned people in 2019 had already been in prison before. Although only about 29% of offenders are repeat offenders, they are responsible for nearly 60% of crimes. To address this, Japan uses strong community support systems. One of the key features is the Volunteer Probation Officer system, known as Hogoshi. These are around 47,000 trained community volunteers who visit, guide, and support young offenders, helping them adjust after release and stay out of trouble. Other volunteer groups like the Big Brothers and Sisters (BBS) and the Women's Association for Rehabilitation Aid (WARA) also play big roles in mentoring youth and supporting families. Over 25,000 employers across Japan also help by offering jobs to ex-offenders. Legally, Japan uses suspended sentences with probation and parole to allow young offenders to stay in the community while being monitored and supported. Parolees have a much lower reoffending rate (10.2%) than those who complete full prison sentences (23.3%). National campaigns like the Yellow Feather Campaign raise awareness and encourage public involvement, and outstanding volunteers are officially recognized. Japan also uses tools like the G-Tool and CFP to understand why crimes happen and give each offender the right kind of support. Special programs using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) help treat issues like drug use, violence, or sexual offenses. Housing and job support are also provided after release, many ex-offenders stay in halfway homes or receive employment help through government partnerships. This community-centered model shows how legal measures, personalized treatment, and social support can work together to reduce juvenile recidivism and give young people a real chance to change. The Table 1 which sum up the comparative analysis of Rehabilitation approaches taken by different countries is shown below.

Table 1 Comparative Analysis

Country	Key Rehabilitation Approaches	Support After Release
Norway	Multisystemic Therapy (MST), restorative justice, therapy, education	Youth units, counseling, school support
North Dakota (USA)	Functional Family Therapy (FFT), MST, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	Focus on school, mental health services, community programs
Brazil	Child and Adolescent Act (1990), community programs, some NGO and faith group efforts	Very limited; few job training or mental health services
France	Juvenile Justice Code (2021), therapy, job training, NGO involvement	Legal aid, education, housing support via NGOs
Japan	Volunteer Probation Officers (Hogoshi), Brothers and Sisters (BBS), WARA, CBT-based programs	Halfway houses, job placements, Yellow Feather Campaign

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

For this study, the secondary data are collected and compared both all India and Kerala Rates.¹⁶ Studied continued variable rates from 2017 till 2022. Since in 2022 the juvenile recidivism rate is high in 2022, detailed study was made in this study concentrating on this year in depth. **Hypothesis Testing** can be performed using the nominal data and these data are sufficiently structured and hypothesis are statistically tested. Area survey is been performed.

(a) Regional Comparison: Kerala vs All India

Firstly, the study should be done to determine – Whether the recidivism rate between Kerala and all India is different? For this data on Recidivism rate is take as on Table 2 shown below.

Table 2 Observed Data of Recidivism in Kerala and All India from National Crime Records – 2022

Location	Recidivist	Non- Recidivist	Total
Kerala	6	607	613
All India	325	37455	37780
Total	331	38062	38393

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Recidivism rates in Kerala and India are not significantly different.

Test Used: Chi-square test

Calculate expected value (E) = $\frac{\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}}{\text{Grand Total}}$

Kerala Recidivist, E \cong 5.28489

Kerala Non – Recidivist, E \cong 607.715

All India Recidivist, E \cong 325.7151

All India Non – Recidivist, E \cong 37454.28489

Chi- square formula $\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i = 0.09676 + 0.000841 + 0.001569 + 0.01382 = \underline{0.11299}$

Degree of freedom, df = 1

Determine the table value, at 5% for 1df = 3.841 (as per table)

Since $\chi^2 < 3.841$, we fail to reject H₀. The recidivism rates between Kerala and All India are statistically similar, indicating proportionate distribution. Conclude that + the recidivist rate is proportionate to only total population. Rates are same, whether it is in Kerala or in all India.

(b) Educational Background:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Educational level and recidivism are independent.

Table 3 Education Level of recidivist in Kerala and All India - National Crime Records Bureau – 2022

Educational Level	Total Juveniles	Recidivist	Recidivist Rate (%)
ALL INDIA			
Lower Education	10873	94	0.86
Higher Education	26907	231	0.86
Kerala			
Lower Education	34	0	0
Higher Education	579	6	1.04

i.e. For juveniles with lower education in Kerala is 0% recidivism and with having higher education is 1.04%. This pattern is unusual and indicates dependence between education level and recidivism in Kerala. If education and recidivism were truly independent, we will find similar recidivism proportions in all categories. Here only in All India calculations it is similar proportion, in Kerala calculation it is different proportion. This shows that education level and juvenile recidivism are not independent and hence reject the null hypothesis. This means education level can include the technical level also, we know that the mobile usage has increases the crimes. Such external variables can also be influenced to increase recidivism. So, conclude that – to some extend the educational background can influence recidivism also.

(c) Family Background:

Next, on check with whether the recidivism rate have any relation with family background of children.

Table 4 Family background in Kerala and All India - National Crime Records Bureau– 2022

Family Background	Total Juveniles	Recidivist	Recidivist Rate (%)
ALL INDIA			
Living with family & guardians	35932	309	0.86
Homeless	1848	16	0.86
KERALA			
Living with family & guardians	605	6	0.99
Homeless	8	0	0

This is much clearer that all recidivists in Kerala come from those living with families, while none from homeless. Though nationally, the difference appears small, the fact that proportions vary between categories and across Kerala suggest that family background does have a relationship with recidivism. Therefore, family background and juvenile recidivism are not independent. This point to family background disabilities like criminal background disabilities like criminal background of parents, non – proper counselling, inability of parents getting strict etc.

(d) Rehabilitation Mechanism

Next to be noted whether the vocational training is relevant. Test if vocational training significantly improves the chance of job placement compared to those who did not undergo training.

Table 5 Observed Data from KAVAL project in Kerala– 2020

Metrics	Value
Vocational Training Sent	205
Vocational Training Completed	85
Job placement After Training	67
Job Placement without Training	465

Z Test for Proportions: For this compare two proportions;

p1: Proportion of job placements among those who completed vocational training $p = \frac{67}{85} \cong 0.788$

p2: Proportion of job placements of job placements among those who did not receive vocational training.

$$p2 = \frac{\text{Job Placement without Training}}{\text{No. of juveniles who do not receive vocational training}} = \frac{465}{1912 - 205} \cong 0.272$$

$$Z \text{ Test, } z = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{p(1-p)\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}} \text{ where } p = \frac{x_1 + x_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$

$$x_1 = 67 \quad n_1 = 85 \quad x_2 = 465 \quad n_2 = 1707 \quad p_1 = 0.788 \quad p_2 = 0.272 \quad p \cong 0.2968$$

$$Z = \frac{0.788 - 0.272}{\sqrt{0.2968(1-0.2968)\left(\frac{1}{85} + \frac{1}{1707}\right)}} \cong 10.16$$

$$P_value = 1 - \text{CDF}(Z) = \mathbf{P(Z > 10.16)} \cong 0.00000000001$$

We know that critical z value at 5% significance = 1.645; since Z value > 1.645. This is clearly draw in Figure 4 below.

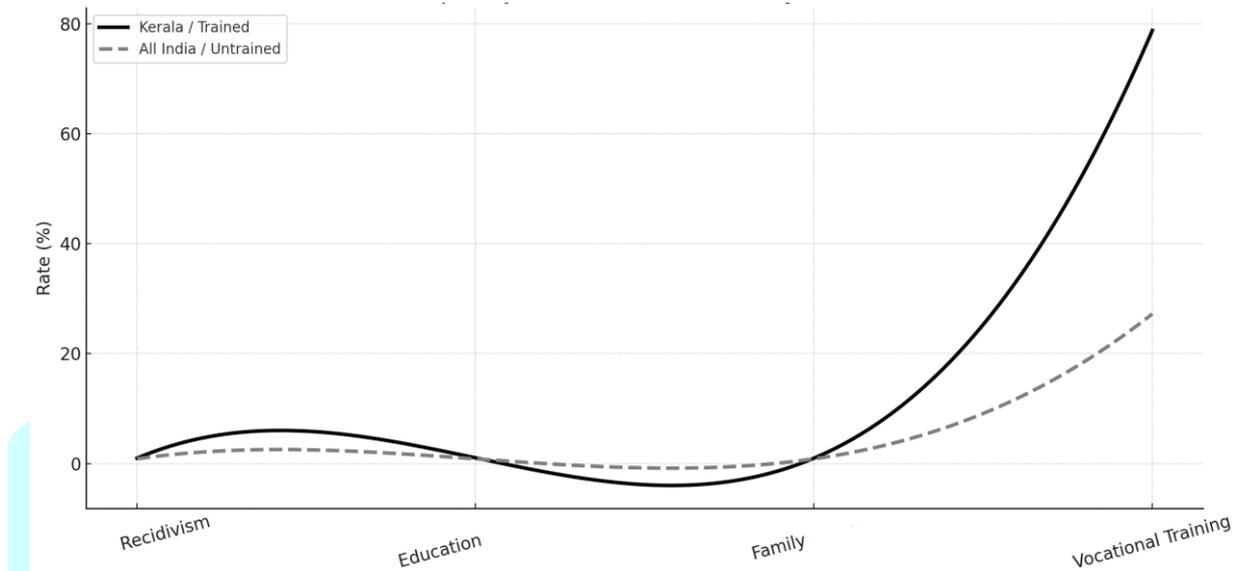


Fig.4 Combined Graph of Juvenile Recidivism Analysis

This means that, the null hypothesis is rejected and there is strong evidence that vocational training significantly increases the chances of job placement among juveniles in the KAVAL program. **So, in general the null hypothesis is rejected.** i.e. Education level, family/ social support, rehabilitation and recidivism are not independent. So, Juvenile offenders who do not receive proper rehabilitation, education and social support are more likely to reoffend independent. i.e. These variables are dependent and inter-related with recidivism.

IX. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rehabilitating juvenile offenders in India faces several significant **challenges** that weaken their performance. In Observation Homes, juveniles receive counseling, library access, and leisure activities during their remand period. However, during this time, they freely interact with their cell mates, sometimes those involved in more serious crimes. This interaction allows them to influence each other negatively, reinforcing criminal attitudes instead of correcting them.

A major contributing factor to juvenile recidivism is the desire among many young offenders to gain quick money and independence without hard work. This mindset, often developed early on, is rarely addressed thoroughly through existing counseling sessions. Psychiatrists and psychologists point out that behavioral issues such as lying, truancy, and aggression often emerge in early childhood and are made worse by poor parental supervision, exposure to drugs, and a lack of emotional support.

After being released, juveniles often return to the same peer groups or neighborhood that encouraged criminal behavior in the first place. Although programs like Kerala's Kaval try to track and assist released juveniles, many slip through the cracks due to poor coordination between the Kaval team and police. Most of the juveniles after release are not trackable also would end up in recidivism.

Society also plays a role in increasing recidivism. Many communities are hesitant to welcome back reformed juveniles. This leads to emotional isolation and limits opportunities for positive social engagement. Families too often fail to provide the support needed. Some are indifferent, and others may unknowingly encourage

unlawful behavior. Even though family counseling was provided, parental engagement lacks due to improper support after the juveniles are once released. So this programs leaves a serious gap in the rehabilitation process here.

To address these challenges, this study offers several **recommendations**. First, in addition to counseling to guardians, parenting workshops should be made mandatory to help rebuild family bonds and prepare families to support behavior change. Community awareness campaigns should be launched to reduce stigma and encourage acceptance of reformed juveniles. Schools, local leaders, and community groups must play an active role in reintegration.

Secondly, proper classification and supervision should be implemented within Observation Homes to separate juveniles based on offense severity and behavioral risk. Also, each juvenile should be placed separately. This prevents high-risk juveniles from influencing those involved in lesser crimes. In addition, regular seminars and classes on personal development, ethics, and emotional control should be conducted to guide juveniles toward better behavior.

Third, the Kaval program's capacity should be enhanced. Technology such as GPS tracking, where appropriate, and routine home visits can improve monitoring of released juveniles. Stronger coordination between stakeholders; Kaval officers, police, JJBs, CWCs, NGOs, and schools, will ensure smoother rehabilitation and reintegration. Structured care plans should be created and monitored regularly.

Fourth, the legal system must enforce stricter punishment in specific cases. Juveniles between 16 and 18 years who show criminal intent should face stronger consequences as a deterrent. However, this must still align with the child's right to reform, and the justice system must maintain a child-friendly approach. In the punitive system, sometimes a *monetary fine is imposed*, which may not be meaningful or helpful for children. In fact, such punishments may push them further into crime instead of encouraging behavioral change. If detention is need, this should be made were needed instead of releasing children by imposing simple fines. If only monetary fines are only imposed, this makes the presumption in mind of children that till 18 years they can commit any crime and can even reoffend. Lastly, better reporting and data collection is essential. Underreporting of juvenile crimes is a major barrier to understanding the true scale of the issue. Coordinated efforts between the police and aftercare teams are needed to ensure all juvenile offenses are properly addressed.

X. CONCLUSION

The study highlights how juvenile recidivism in India is not just about a child committing a crime again. It reflects deeper social, emotional, and structural problems that must be addressed. The problem lies not only in the child's behavior but in the failure of families, institutions, and society to support rehabilitation and reintegration. Criminological and psychological theories such as Strain Theory, Social Learning Theory, Labeling Theory, and Cognitive Development Theory provide insight into this. The study also emphasized the importance of rehabilitation over punishment. A punitive approach may create fear, but it does not ensure long-term behavioral change. On the other hand, rehabilitation, which focuses on therapy, skill-building, and emotional support, offers a greater chance of reform. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 supports a child-friendly system, but gaps in implementation hinder its effectiveness. Cases like the Jubilee Hills gang rape highlight the need to balance public safety with the juvenile's capacity for change. The justice system must be both compassionate and vigilant. It must understand that true reform takes time, consistent support, and cooperation from families, communities, and institutions.

This study recommends a multi-level approach that includes strong legal safeguards, individualized counseling, guardian involvement, structured aftercare, and positive community support. All these elements must work together to ensure that juveniles not only avoid reoffending but also find their place in society. The goal is not just to prevent crime but to transform lives. With the right efforts, young offenders can be guided toward a better path and offered a real second chance.

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