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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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3.1. Introduction

The study emphasizes how social media become a factor because of which different types of juvenile delinquency arise. Juvenile delinquency is a significant dilemma in our Criminal Justice system. These youth are considered juveniles until they reach the age of eighteen juvenile delinquency says most heinous crimes are done through children also social media transformed the minds of teenagers for example Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and YouTube. This paper targets the nature of juvenile crimes through social media as social media plays positive and negative impacts. Still, in negative impact moulding the mind of juveniles to commit such a kind of heinous crimes like murder, rape, theft, and petty offenses in certain situations, individuals over the age of 18 may still be heard in juvenile courts, meaning they are treated as juveniles under the law. The United Nations (UN) defines "youth" as those between 15 and 24 years of age. The term "child delinquents" is often used to describe children under 13 who have committed offenses, although in other contexts, "children" are typically considered to be anyone under 18.

3.1.1. Background: -

The historical evolution of the juvenile justice system in India has undergone significant transformation over the years, shaped by changing social, legal, and international norms.

The primary focus of juvenile justice has always been the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders into society, rather than punitive measures.

This approach is consistent with the idea that juvenile offenders should receive different treatment than adult offenders because of their age and developmental stage.

3.1.2. Current impact on the mind of juveniles

One of the landmark cases is from Jabalpur "The double murder case of

Jabalpur where a 16-year-old girl killed her father and 7 years brother with her boyfriend who is 21 years old she was inspired by the crime petrol channel and Instagram where an adult boy Mukund met her and when the father knows the situation they give them warning and the boy who brainwash the girl to do such kind of heinous crime with him and after that they both went to Andhra Pradesh to hide from police and they were arrested in after 3 months of crime in her trial she told the police officers that how they watch serial murder cases and planned to kill her father accordingly 37 knives and there are many cases like that where the delinquency of juvenile is inconceivable now social media is the biggest factor affecting society not only juveniles but the adults are also involved in that types of crimes the idea which they get from social media boost their power to immerse into such a kind of crimes.

3.1.3. Social media and youth behavior

Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Snapchat, are widely used by teenagers and young adults. These platforms provide a space for interaction, identity formation, and access to global content. However, they can also amplify certain risk factors that contribute to delinquent behavior:

1. **Peer Influence:** Adolescents are highly susceptible to peer pressure, and social media platforms often amplify peer influences. When youth are exposed to or engage in harmful behavior online—such as promoting violence, substance abuse, or cyberbullying—they may be encouraged to imitate or participate in these activities offline.

2. **Exposure to Inappropriate Content:** social media gives young people access to a vast amount of content, some of which may be harmful or inappropriate.

Exposure to violent, explicit, or illegal content can normalize such behaviors, leading to an increase in risky or delinquent activities.

3. **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:** One of the most pervasive negative effects of social media is cyberbullying. Victims of cyberbullying may engage in delinquent behavior as a coping mechanism, while perpetrators of cyberbullying themselves are engaging in delinquency by violating others' rights and privacy.

4. **Anonymity and Impulsivity:** The anonymity afforded by certain social media platforms can encourage young people to act impulsively, without considering the consequences. This can lead to harmful behaviors, such as posting threatening

or inappropriate content, engaging in cybercrime, or participating in online challenges that promote dangerous activities.

5. Games: “The Blue Whale Challenge” game is a notorious game that targets young people and gives them the suspicious and dangerous task of self-harm or suicide once a boy kills her mother. This example underscores how social media can be used to manipulate and exploit youth, pushing them toward delinquent behavior.

3.1.4. Social media as an aqueduct for criminal activities

The rise of social media has also provided new avenues for juveniles to engage in criminal activities. Some of the ways social media may directly contribute to juvenile delinquency include.

Cybercrime: Young people, with their familiarity with technology, may become involved in cybercrimes, such as hacking, identity theft, or online scams. Social media platforms may also be used to coordinate or plan illegal activities, such as theft or vandalism for example using someone’s personal information or infecting a computer system with malware that locks access to data and demanding payment for its release.

Gang Activity: Social media has become a tool for gangs to recruit members, organize activities, and promote their criminal activities. Youths drawn into these online communities may be more likely to engage in delinquent real-life behaviours. Weapons trafficking, extortion demanding money or services from individuals or businesses under threats of violence or harm.

Drug Use and Trafficking: Social media has been linked to the promotion of drug use, with users posting images or videos that glamorize substance abuse. In some cases, social media platforms are used to facilitate the sale or distribution of illegal drugs among young people.

Social media content significantly contributes to juvenile delinquency through various mechanisms, including exposure to harmful behavior, peer influence, and the development of negative self-concepts. The interplay of these factors creates an environment where minors are more susceptible to engaging in deviant behaviour. In a high-profile case, Indian authorities intercepted a shipment of drugs worth millions of dollars on a cargo ship at the Mundra port. This incident highlighted India's role as a transit point in the global drug trade.

3.2. Extensive Factors

1. Influence of Content Exposure

- **Exposure to Violent and Sexual Content:** Adolescents often find themselves encountering violent and sexually explicit material on social media platforms, which can heavily influence their nature. Due to their still-developing cognitive abilities, they may struggle with impulse control, making them more susceptible to acting out in aggressive or inappropriate ways. The more they are exposed to such content, the greater the likelihood that they will attempt to imitate it, particularly if they see these behaviors glorified or normalized online. For example, repeated exposure to explicit sexual content might encourage minors to engage in risky behaviors as they start seeking ways to satisfy their growing curiosity and desires, without fully understanding the consequences.

- **Normalization of Harmful Behaviours:** One of the more troubling aspects of social media is its role in making negative behaviors seem acceptable. Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat can normalize risky actions, such as **cyberbullying, sexting,** and even criminal activities, by providing these behaviors with a stage where they are seen, shared, and sometimes even celebrated. Young users are highly impressionable, and when they see their peers or influencers engage in these actions without facing significant repercussions, they may come to view such behaviors as normal or even desirable. This creates a dangerous environment where unhealthy or unlawful behaviors are no longer viewed as wrong but as a common part of social interaction.

2. Peer Influence Dynamics

- **Amplification of Peer Delinquency Through Online Interactions:**

Adolescence is a period heavily influenced by peer relationships, and social media dramatically extends the reach of these peer interactions. Through platforms, adolescents are no longer just engaging with friends from school or their neighbourhood; they are also interacting with a much broader, sometimes anonymous, audience. These interactions can reinforce or encourage deviant behaviors, as adolescents may feel pressure to conform to what their online peer groups deem "cool" or acceptable. For instance, if one peer group endorses reckless or illegal behavior, like vandalism or drug use, young individuals may feel compelled to engage in these activities to fit in, even if they wouldn't normally consider such actions. The constant flow of peer feedback on social media—from likes and comments to messages—

further amplifies this influence, making it easier for delinquent tendencies to spread among groups of adolescents.

- **Seeking Validation Through social media:** Social media places a huge emphasis on appearance and self-presentation, encouraging adolescents to craft online personas that often revolve around getting validation from others. This pursuit of approval through likes, shares, and positive comments can push minors to engage in behaviors that attract attention, even if those behaviors are destructive or illegal.

Adolescents who tie their self-worth to their online popularity or appearance may engage in delinquent acts as a means to gain recognition or approval from their peers.

The constant comparison with others' curated lives can also create a sense of inadequacy, leading some to seek out risky behavior in an attempt to stand out or feel validated. Cheng & Lau's study (2018) demonstrated how high social media usage correlates with an increase in delinquent acts, particularly among minors who base their self-esteem on social media interactions and peer validation.

3. Psychological Factors

- **Lack of Legal Awareness and Guidance:** One of the underlying issues with minors' engagement in delinquent behavior is their limited understanding of the legal consequences of certain online actions. Many adolescents are unaware that activities like cyberbullying, hacking, or sharing explicit content could lead to criminal charges or long-term consequences. Without sufficient guidance from parents, educators, or mentors, they are left to navigate this complex digital landscape on their own, often making decisions based on peer pressure or incomplete information. This gap in digital education leaves them vulnerable to engaging in behaviors they don't fully understand the implications of, increasing their chances of crossing legal boundaries without realizing it.

- **Impact on Self-Esteem and Emotional Well-being:** social media can significantly distort how young users perceive themselves, often leading to feelings of inadequacy or low self-worth. The constant need to compare oneself to others, coupled with the pressure to maintain a perfect online persona, can harm adolescents' self-esteem. When these feelings of inadequacy persist, minors may turn to delinquency as a way to assert control or express their frustrations. For example, an adolescent who feels ignored or ridiculed online may act out in the form of bullying or aggression to regain a sense

of power or attention. Additionally, social media can create an emotional rollercoaster, where the lows of rejection or criticism follow the highs of validation.

Cheng & Lau's (2018) research suggests that these emotional swings can drive minors to cope through delinquent behaviors, as they seek ways to navigate their distorted self-image and regain a sense of control.

3.2.1. Social media Control the mind of youths

Social media also plays a vital role in controlling the minds of youth in today's world tells people's minds to use it every four hours, due to which they cannot utilize the time properly, leading to increased crime. The impact of social factors, demographics, and mental factors on usage patterns is also an important topic. It is important to note in this research review that the landscape of social media platforms is constantly changing, and the behavior of users also changes over time. Social media has profound psychological impacts on young people, including anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

This is due in large part to constant social comparison, cyberbullying, and the feeling of fear of missing out (FOMO) on social media. Social media often distorts self-perception, leading to unrealistic norms and body image issues. Young people are often exposed to curated content, leading to feelings of decreased life satisfaction and feelings of inadequacy. Social media has redefined social norms, thereby changing perceptions of culture, identity, and relationships. However, it can also increase social pressures, leading to amplification of social issues and the spread of misinformation, which can affect social cohesion and trust. At the same time, social media has also redefined the scope of sociality and community interaction, which can have both positive and negative effects on society and collective behavior.⁴⁷ Thus, social media has an impact on both the mental and social health of youth, and this impact is unique because it changes many social structures and individual perceptions simultaneously.

Family Dynamics

§ Social media use can have a profound impact on expectations, communication styles, and the general atmosphere within a family, which in turn affects youth's family dynamics. Family members may experience changes in their ability to communicate their feelings and thoughts to one another due to social media, which can lead to a

decrease in mutual understanding.

§ Additionally, excessive social media use can often lead to a decrease in in-person interactions, misunderstandings, and sometimes conflicts. When family members spend more time online, it hinders real conversations and emotional connections with one another. Especially among youth, time spent on social media can decrease time spent with parents or other family members, leading to distance and emotional isolation in relationships.

§ Also, social media can cause tensions between family members over privacy and confidentiality, especially when parents want to monitor children's online activities. This can lead to trust issues between youth and parents, leading to a tense atmosphere in the family.

§ In this digital age, it is extremely important to maintain a healthy balance between online and offline activities, set boundaries, and encourage open communication in the family. Apart from all this, it is also important that parents and children understand the impact of each other's time management and online activities, so that a positive family environment is maintained and family relationships are strengthened.

§ Keeping all these factors in mind, families must strike a balance between the positive and negative effects of social media, to maintain healthy, harmonious family relationships with youth.

4.3.3. Effect of Juvenile Delinquency Increased Risk of Exploitation:

Juvenile offenders are often victims of exploitation and violence themselves. When they engage in criminal activities, they face physical, mental, and sexual abuse. In addition, adult offenders use them for their own purposes, trapping them in more dangerous situations.

2. Disruption in Education and Impact on Future Prospects:

Involvement in crime disrupts the education of adolescents. Their education is disrupted due to absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion from school. These educational setbacks affect their future career and life opportunities, increasing their risk of recidivism.

3. Legal and Social Restrictions:

A juvenile's criminal record can limit their chances of obtaining employment, education, and housing. It also isolates them from society, reducing their chances of rehabilitation.

Repeat offenders face harsh punishments, which does not reduce their criminal

behavior, but rather makes it more severe.

4. Impact on Community Cohesion and Development:

Juvenile crime puts pressure on the resources of the community, and this hampers economic development. The fear of crime weakens the unity and mutual cooperation of the community, which leads to social disintegration and the neighbourhood environment starts deteriorating.

5. Economic Burden and Cost to Society:

The economic costs associated with juvenile crime are heavy on society. This includes costs such as law enforcement, justice process, and compensation to victims. Apart from this, productivity is reduced due to juveniles engaging in crime. To prevent juvenile crime, it is necessary to invest in prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation so that the economic and social consequences of these crimes can be avoided in the future.

4.96. Erosion of Social Cohesion:

The increasing incidence of juvenile delinquency weakens social cohesion, thereby deteriorating community structures and relationships. This creates a cycle of crime that impacts every level of society, and as a result, increases the overall instability and insecurity in society.

Considering all these aspects, a holistic approach is required to deal with the effects of juvenile delinquency, which not only focuses on the rehabilitation of juveniles but also enables them to improve their future and make a positive contribution to society.

3.4. Landmark Cases

2012 Delhi Gang Rape:

This case is also known as “Nirbhaya rape” On December 16, 2012, a 22- year-old nursing intern with her male friend after watching the film was waiting for the bus at Munrika. They sat on the bus where 6 other males included with the driver of them found a minor they all started an argument with the boy and one by one raped the girl after that the minor committed brutal injuries and inserted an iron rod in her vagina her medical report says that the heavy L-shape substance inserted in her abdomen due to which she lost the fight of life. After that amendments are made to the Juvenile Act.

Jabalpur double murder caseA 16-year-old girl killed her father and 6-year-old brother after her father made restrictions on her love life the accused Mukund watched serial killer stories and south movies and a lot of reels are the major reason for that

heinous murder.

Amarjeet Sada v. State of Bihar Amarjeet Sada is known as one of the youngest serial killers in history. His case shocked the world due to the extreme nature of his crimes and his age. Sada, an eight-year-old boy from the village of Mushahar in Bihar, India, was arrested in 2007 for the murders of three infants, including his sister and cousin.

50 Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency:

Association of society: - The association of society has an essential function in teaching the juvenile how to live, conduct, and communicate, and the growth of the child emerges from child socialization in society.

Mass media: - Mass media plays a huge role in the diversion of youth mass media is diverse in itself as it comprises Netflix, Hulu, and Amazone Prime TV, Jio TV, advertisement plays a direct impact on the diverse role of mass media influence the mind to juvenile to commit such a type of crimes the crime shows Impact and if that type of content stops then the issue of delinquency becomes less.

Education: The rehabilitation of education practice promotes practical knowledge and also leads to the prevention of youth crimes. Education plays a pivotal role in crime prevention and in fostering a culture of lawfulness within society. By integrating crime

prevention and criminal justice principles into all levels of education, from primary schools to higher education, we can create sustainable, long-term strategies to combat crime and violence. Early exposure to values such as justice, equality, respect for the law, and conflict resolution can equip individuals with the moral framework necessary to avoid delinquent behavior and contribute positively to society.

Juvenile delinquency is a complex social issue, driven by various factors such as socio-economic conditions, family structures, influence of peer groups, and psychological challenges. A multi-pronged approach is needed to address this problem, which strikes a balance between accountability and rehabilitation while keeping in mind that juveniles are still in the early stages of their development. The role of the juvenile justice system should not only be to prevent criminal behavior but also to guide them toward reform through education, counselling, and community support.

Preventive strategies, such as early intervention, family support programs, and educational initiatives that encourage positive social behavior, are critical in

reducing juvenile crime rates. It is essential to incorporate modern challenges, such as the effects of social media and cybercrime, into these efforts to respond promptly to changing delinquent behaviours.

51Finally, by focusing on rehabilitation and prevention, society can work toward reducing repeat crimes and directing at-risk youth onto a constructive path. Collaborative efforts between families, schools, communities, and the justice system are essential to nurture responsible, law-abiding citizens and create a safer, more cohesive society.

