

## **TRENDS AND FACTORS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN BANGLADESH: SOME OBSERVATIONS**

Nahid Ferdousi\*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Children are not born as delinquents. Most of the children become delinquents due to the socio-economic circumstances in Bangladesh, not by their choice. Juvenile delinquency has emerged as a matter of serious concern in recent times with the rising number of children involved in unlawful activities. However, day by day the number of male and female delinquents is increasing and they are involved in different types of offences such as theft, hijacking, carrying illegal arms and drugs, killing, trafficking, smuggling and fraudulent activities. They have become victims of various socio-economic circumstances like poverty, lack of guidance, extensive use of satellite channels, misuse of internet and peer pressure etc. Consequently, present social structure destroying juvenile's childhood resulting in denial of their rights, for example: family life, education, health, games, care and protection. This particular problem requires special care, positive attention and child-friendly attitude for their protection and prevention. This article explores the present trends and major socio-economic factors of juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Juvenile delinquency is a complex problem in the current world. Generally 'Juvenile Delinquency' means the offence committed by children under a particular age limit. It is a serious problem in the society because the root of adult criminality lies in juvenile delinquency. As many other countries in the world, juvenile delinquency is a major issue of concern in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world with 40% of the population living below the poverty-standard. The demography of Bangladesh consists of 13% of the population under 5 years, 38% under

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\* Assistant Professor (Law), School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Language, Bangladesh Open University, Gazipur.

15 years and 47% under 18 years of age<sup>1</sup>. About 80% people can not fulfill their basic human-needs due to their poverty associated with acute problem of unemployment, over-population, illiteracy, malnutrition and natural calamities etc<sup>2</sup>. Among the many problems that Bangladesh is currently facing, juvenile delinquency is a serious problem and recently has received considerable attention<sup>3</sup>.

Juveniles get easily involved in unlawful activities by their surroundings. So, the socio-economic structure and condition of Bangladesh are the root causes of juvenile delinquency<sup>4</sup>, such as poverty, parents' ignorance, low level of education, insufficient religious practice, cultural conflict, impact of migration, political instability, extensive use of satellite channels, misuse of internet, negative effect of media, drug business, peer pressure, lack of opportunity and consequent frustration etc<sup>5</sup>. Deficient self-control and insufficient control by the parents, guardians and society also lead them off track<sup>6</sup>.

At present, the traditional offences of juveniles are not only limited within- telling lies, running away from schools, stealing and teasing girls; they are also involved in unlawful, anti-social and suspicious activities which greatly affect the law and order situation of the society and the

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<sup>1</sup> GOB, *Third and Fourth Periodic Report of the Government of Bangladesh under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, (Dhaka: Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2007), at p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Hossain, Amzad., *Correctional Services for the Juvenile Delinquents in Bangladesh: A Study of NICS Tongi*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Institute of Bangladesh Studies. University of Rajshahi, 2002, at p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Chowdhury, Afsan., *et al.*, (ed.) *Juvenile Deprivation of Liberty: Prospects for Alternative in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Save the Children UK and Services Plus, 2002, at p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Samad, Abdus., *et al.*, *Juvenile Justice Administration and Correctional Services in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Ministry of Social Welfare, 2002, at p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Mohammad, Nur., "Child Protection: Compliance of Children Act 1974", Seminar on *Children Act and Child Rights*, Organized by Bangladesh Retired Police Officers Welfare Association and World Vision, Dhobaura ADP, Mymensingh, 23 September, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Karzon, Sheikh Hafizur Rahman., *Theoretical and Applied Criminology*, Dhaka: Palal Prokashoni, 2008, at p. 364.

country at large<sup>7</sup>. However, day by day male delinquents are increasing and they are involved in different types of offences such as murder, theft, hijacking, acid-throwing, arms and drug peddling, killing, eve teasing etc<sup>8</sup>. Female delinquents are also involved in different types of offences such as trafficking, hijacking, smuggling, carrying illegal arms and drugs, keeping counterfeit coin and fraudulent activities.

Thus, a large number of children- both male and female are involved with criminal offences, are the victims of socio-economic condition and denial of legitimate rights for education, health-care, shelter, and protection. However, because of their physical and mental immaturity, they are susceptible to become victims of social injustice and require special rights to protect them as well as to meet their unique needs.

#### **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: MEANING**

Juvenile delinquency' refers to antisocial or illegal behavior by children<sup>9</sup>. So, the juvenile delinquency is the term used for offence committed by children under a particular age limit. According to the *Children Act, 1974*, the age limit of children is 16 years in Bangladesh. But in *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989* 'juvenile' refers to a person under the age of 18 years. So, children laws and policies in Bangladesh are not consistent with *UNCRC*. The definition of a child or a juvenile is not uniform in the laws of Bangladesh. Different legislations provide different age limits of the delinquents but all of them are within 12 to 18 years of age. The age limits of a child provided under various legislations are as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, *Juvenile Justice in South Asia: Improving Protection for Children in Conflict with the Law*, Dhaka, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Halim, M. Abdul., *Children: Role of Voluntary Organizations in the Protection of Human Rights at the Grassroots*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR), 1996, at p. 88.

<sup>9</sup> Hossain, Mohammad Sajjad., Separate Treatment Measures for Juvenile offenders in Indian Sub-continent: A Brief Historical Description, in the book of *Human Rights, Investigation-Prosecution and Juvenile Treatment*, Dhaka: Social Science Research Council, Ministry of Planning, 2008, at p. 117.