



Review on reflection of Ashtanga Yoga in Juvenile Delinquency

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Juvenile delinquency remains a significant social issue, with young individuals engaging in criminal activities due to various underlying factors such as family dynamics, socio-economic challenges, peer influence, and exposure to violence, etc. Despite a recent decline in juvenile crime rates, the need for effective prevention and rehabilitation strategies persists till date. This paper explores the potential of Ashtanga Yoga, as a holistic intervention to address juvenile delinquency. Yoga, with its structured eight-limb path, offers a framework for cultivating self-discipline, emotional regulation, and ethical behaviour in children and adolescents. Key components; Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi plays transformative roles in mitigating delinquent behaviours. Thus, discusses how Ashtanga Yoga can support juveniles in overcoming their dangerous nature and empowering them to make positive behavioural changes and reintegrate into society.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency, Juveniles, Delinquents, Ashtanga Yoga

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Introduction

Juvenile delinquency, the involvement of young individuals in criminal activities, is a pressing social issue affecting communities worldwide. It encompasses a range of offenses, from minor infractions to serious crimes, often raising concerns about its causes, implications, and prevention. Factors such as family dynamics, socio-economic challenges, peer influence, and exposure to violence contribute to this phenomenon, making it a multifaceted problem.[1] According to the Children Act of 1960 in India, a delinquent is described as "a child who has committed an offence." [2]

The term juvenile as per Juvenile Justice act of 1986 refers to boys under the age of 16 and girls under the age of 18. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, marked a significant milestone in India's criminal justice system. This legislation establishes that any boy or girl under the age of 18 who commits an offense is classified as a "juvenile in conflict with the law" or a "juvenile offender." According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of India, a "juvenile in conflict with law" is defined as an individual below 18 years of age who comes into contact with the justice system due to being suspected or accused of committing a crime.[3] Broadly speaking, delinquency extends beyond "juvenile crime" and encompasses all forms of deviation from typical youthful behaviour. It includes individuals who are unruly, uncontrollable, consistently defiant, those who abandon their homes to associate with unethical individuals, as well as those exhibiting behavioural issues or engaging in antisocial activities.[4]

In terms of the crime rate, measured as the number of juvenile crimes per lakh of the population, a fluctuating pattern emerges. The highest occurrence is observed in children aged 15 years and older. Boys have an incidence rate that is 4 to 5 times higher than that of girls.⁵ In 2011, the rate was 2.8%, which slightly increased to 3.3% in 2012. This trend continued to rise in 2013 and 2014, reaching a peak of 3.9%. However, following this peak, the rate began to decline. In 2015, it decreased to 3.3%, then rose slightly to 3.4% in 2016. From 2017 onward, the crime rate continued to fall, reaching 3.1% in 2017, 2.9% in both 2018 and 2019, and finally dropping to 2.6% in 2020.[6]

An analysis of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data reveals a significant trend regarding juvenile crime between 2013 and 2022. During this period, the total number of crimes committed by juveniles decreased substantially, from 43,506 cases in 2013 to 30,555 cases in 2022. This reduction of 12,951 cases signifies a decline of approximately 30%, indicating a drop in juvenile crime over the decade.[7]

While this drop in juvenile delinquency is not so noteworthy, it highlights the ongoing need for the country and society to implement more effective preventative strategies. There is still a pressing requirement to reduce juvenile crime through various approaches aimed at addressing the root causes and intervening early.

Addressing juvenile delinquency necessitates a thorough understanding of its underlying causes and a unified approach to devising effective strategies that facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of young individuals into society. One such approach, which can yield long-term benefits, is the incorporation of *Yoga* practices starting in childhood.

Yoga fosters a holistic impact on a juvenile's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, shaping them into healthier-more balanced individuals. The *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* provide a structured framework for self-discipline, self-awareness, and spiritual growth through its eightfold path which includes *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. [8]

Each of these components offers unique benefits that can address juvenile delinquency by instilling positive behaviours and aiding in rehabilitation. These serve as natural tranquilizers, playing a transformative role in fostering the holistic development of children. Also nurtures positive growth, enhance inner harmony, and significantly reduces tendencies towards delinquent behaviour. By combining physical discipline with mental and emotional cultivation, these yoga traditions act as a comprehensive tool for promoting well-being and self-awareness in younger generation.

Materials and Methods

Materials have been collected from Yogic Text books of *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, *Hata Yoga Pradeepika*, Modern books and research articles.

Review of Literature

Understanding Juvenile Delinquency

Definitions[9,10]

In the words of W.H. Sheldon, it is "behaviour disappointing beyond reasonable expectation".

Cyril Burt says, "delinquency occurs in a child, when his antisocial tendencies appear so grave that he becomes or ought to become the subject of official action".

Frederick B. Sussmann presents a summary list of acts or conditions included in delinquency definition or description, viz, violation of any law or ordinance, habitual truancy, association with thieves, vicious or immoral persons, and incorrigible beyond control of parent or guardian and so on.

C.B. Mamoria writes, "the phrase juvenile delinquency may be loosely used to cover any kind of deviant behaviour of children which violates normative rules, understanding or expectation of social system".

Causes for delinquency in children

Biological causes

Juvenile delinquency can often be attributed to biological factors, including hereditary abnormalities, intellectual impairments, physical disabilities, and hormonal imbalances. Research has also highlighted a potential connection between chromosomal irregularities and a propensity for delinquent or criminal behaviour. For instance, studies conducted on criminal patients in Scotland and other locations have identified a correlation, with some individuals exhibiting an extra Y chromosome.

Men with this XYY chromosomal pattern often experience profound disturbances in their overall personality.[11]

Social causes

Social factors significantly influence juvenile delinquency. These include disrupted family dynamics, such as the loss of a parent, parental separation, or the presence of a stepmother. Unstable home environments also play a role, often marked by poverty, alcoholism, parental neglect, lack of love, affection, support, or supervision.

Additionally, inadequate knowledge about effective child-rearing practices, excessively large families, truancy, peer influence and involvement in unlawful activities further contribute to juvenile delinquency. [11,12]

The media, including television, movies, and the internet, also influences juvenile perceptions, often shaping their attitude towards violence or antisocial behaviours. Exposure to violent or inappropriate content can desensitize young individuals, making them more likely to engage in aggressive or criminal activities, ultimately increasing delinquency rates. [13]

Psychological causes

Undiagnosed or untreated mental health issues, such as conduct disorder, depression, and anxiety, can play a significant role in juvenile delinquency. These conditions, when not addressed, can contribute to a lack of emotional regulation and poor decision-making, which can lead to delinquent behaviours.

Intellectual limitations can also be a contributing factor to juvenile crime. Children with mental challenges may struggle to distinguish between right and wrong, making them more susceptible to manipulation by others, including criminals who exploit their vulnerability.

Furthermore, emotional issues such as jealousy, feelings of inferiority, and frustration with society can drive some children to become antisocial. When these children feel alienated, mistreated, or denied their basic rights, they may resort to criminal behaviours as a way to cope with their emotional struggles. Feelings of fear, depression, excessive anger, and unresolved complexes can all be powerful psychological triggers that contribute to delinquent behaviours in young individuals.[14]

Delinquent's characteristics

Some children are restless, highly energetic, and uninhibited, with a strong adventurous streak and an eagerness to constantly stay active. They thrive on excitement.

On the other hand, there is a contrasting group that is shy, quiet, vindictive, and extremely self-centred. These children show little to no sense of shame or guilt and are indifferent to the feelings and thoughts of others.[15]

Table 1: Ashtanga Yoga

Limbs	Includes Practicing of
Yama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ahimsa: Non-violence ■ Satya: Truthfulness ■ Asteya: Non-stealing ■ Brahmacharya: Celibacy ■ Aparigraha: Non-Possessiveness ■ Kshama: Patience ■ Dhriti: Steadiness of mind ■ Daya: Compassionate ■ Arjava: Honest ■ Mita-Ahara: Moderate and Balanced diet (Saatvika Ahara)
Niyama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Soucha: Purity, Cleanliness ■ Santhosha: Contentment ■ Tapa: Austerity ■ Svadhyaya: Self-study/Self-realisation ■ Ishwara Pranidhana: Adoration of God ■ Astikyaa: Faith in higher self ■ Siddhanta Vakyasravanam: scriptural listening ■ Hri: Modesty ■ Dana: Charity ■ Mati: Proper Cognition ■ Huta: Sacrifice ■ Japa: Recitation
Asana	All forms of Asanas - Standing series, sitting series, supine and prone series
Pranayama	Nadi-sodhana Pranayama Among Ashta Kumbhakas following are suitable for delinquents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ujjayi ■ Sitkari ■ Sheetal ■ Bhramari
Pratyahara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Indriya Pratyahara: Control of senses ■ Mana Pratyahara: Control of mind ■ Karma Pratyahara: Control of action
Dharana	Sustained concentration
Dhyana	Meditation
Samadhi	State of meditative consciousness

Discussion

Yama, the first limb of *Ashtanga Yoga*, lays the groundwork for restraint, self-control, ethical and moral behaviours.[16] Practicing **Ahimsa** uphold kindness and compassion, reduces hostility and violent inclinations, and encourages harmonious conflict resolution. **Satya** cultivates truthfulness and sincerity, minimizing dishonest or manipulative tendencies. **Asteya** nurtures respect for other's possessions, curbs desires for theft and excessive materialism. **Brahmacharya** emphasizes discipline and moderation, helping to control impulsive actions such as risky behaviour such as committing rape, molestation or substance misuse. **Aparigraha** diminishes envy and greed in at-risk youth, lowering the likelihood of criminal tendencies and helping them to resist societal pressures related to materialism and social standing. Teaching **Kshama** motivates young individuals to pause and reflect before taking action, thereby reducing abandoned and high-risk behaviours. **Dhriti** aids delinquents in making thoughtful decisions and taking responsible actions, instilling a sense of accountability. It also builds resilience and strengthens their determination to focus on positive objectives. Through practicing **Daya**, juveniles can develop kindness in their interactions, creating stronger, more supportive, and empathetic connections with peers, mentors, and family. **Arjava** encourages juveniles to own up their actions and make amends for any wrongdoings, this practice fosters personal growth, helping them develop into responsible and respectful individuals. **Mita-Ahara**, which aligns with *Saatvika Ahara*; milder, non-spicy foods excluding onion and garlic - helps reduce irritability and aggression, factors commonly associated with delinquent behaviour. The second limb **Niyama** refers to a set of ethical observances or personal disciplines viz. **Soucha** promoting physical cleanliness, verbal purity and also purifies the mind, fostering a clear, focused, and positive mindset in delinquents. It clears mental clutter, reduce stress, and calms negative emotions like anger or frustration which often trigger disruptive behaviour in adolescents. **Santhosha**, practice of contentment involves accepting what one has, regardless of external circumstances. This sense of satisfaction diminishes the longing for material possessions. **Tapa** promotes self-discipline, self-control and perseverance,

Potentially aiding in behaviour modification and emotional regulation as part of rehabilitation. **Svadyaya** focuses on the practice of reflecting on one's actions and their impact on others. It involves introspection, gaining an understanding over the outcomes of one's behaviour, and ensuring that their actions are in line with socially accepted norms and values. **Ishwara Pranidhana**, **Astikya**, and **Siddhanta Shrivana** are act of yielding to a higher or spiritual power can positively influence delinquent children by providing them with a sense of direction, discipline, and moral clarity. Additionally, they enhance inner peace and helps to cultivate ethical values, guiding them towards a more superintended and compassionate behaviour in the communities. **Hri** promotes self-awareness and emotional maturity, enabling children to make more pensive decisions and build healthier relationships with both themselves and others. **Dana** instils generosity, selflessness, kindness and gratitude. This positive shift in the mindset constructs community-oriented actions. **Mati** gives clarity of thought and plays a transformative role in steering juveniles away from delinquent tendencies and brings them towards a more responsible path. **Huta** involves sacrificing of substance abuse i.e. alcohol, cigarette, drug abuse and also selfish desires, emotional struggles (like jealousy, inferiority, and frustration) as well as powerful psychological triggers such as fear, depression, excessive anger, and unresolved complexes that often contribute to delinquent behaviours in youth. **Japa** can serve as a tool for redirecting the mind-promoting mindfulness, and breaking cycles of harmful behaviour by replacing them with more constructive thoughts and actions. **Asanas**, the third limb of *Ashtanga Yoga*, offer profound benefits for juveniles, particularly in addressing challenges associated with delinquency. Regular practice enhances physical health by improving flexibility, strength, and overall fitness, supporting healthy growth and development. Beyond the physical advantages, *Asanas* provide significant mental, emotional, and social benefits. Mentally, *Asanas* stimulates the release of happy hormones in the brain, relaxes the brain, thereby improving concentration, memory, and cognitive function, while also enhancing focus and mindfulness. These qualities aids in academic focus and decision-making, which are crucial for juveniles at risk of delinquent behaviour. Emotionally, supports self-awareness, emotional regulation,

And resilience, empowering delinquents to navigate challenges, manage stress, and reduce anxiety effectively. This emotional stability can mitigate impulsive tendencies often linked to delinquent actions. On social level, *Asanas* equip juveniles with effective constructive coping mechanisms for peer pressure and social stressors, promoting healthier interpersonal interactions. In group settings, thus encourage collaboration, empathy, and teamwork, nurturing emotional intelligence and healthy relationships. This social reinforcement helps to reduce feelings of isolation and diminishes tendencies towards conflict or antisocial behaviours. **Pranayama**, the fourth component of *Ashtanga Yoga*, plays a crucial role in preserving both physical and mental well-being. **Nadi Sodhana Pranayama's** calming effects on the nervous system and potential influence on the hypothalamus-balances neurological functions, alleviate emotional fluctuations, and promotes relaxation and sense of rejuvenation in delinquents. [17] **Ujjayi Pranayama**, when practiced alongside other *Pranayama* techniques, has been shown to reduce depression in individual's dependent on alcohol. It is also believed to aid in correcting hormonal imbalances, which could combat biological factors contributing to delinquent behavior.[18,19] **Sheetali** and **Sitkari** stand out from other types because they help to cool down the body and lowers brain temperature, as stated by *Swami Swatmarama*. He suggests that this cooling effect is what calms the entire nervous system. By doing so, these techniques can reduce stress, control anger and frustration, ease restlessness, and promote a sense of tranquillity and peace—qualities that are especially beneficial for delinquents. The self-generated sounds and vibrations associated with **Bhramari** are known to elevate consciousness. A study found that practicing *Bhramari* significantly alleviates irritability, depression, and anxiety. Research further highlights that *Bhramari Pranayama* induces a notable increase in alpha, gamma, and theta brain waves, as observed in EEG recordings immediately after practice. Alpha waves promote deep relaxation, gamma waves enhance higher cognitive functions and perceptual abilities, and theta waves support learning, boost creativity, reduce stress, awakening intuition, and aid in the development of advanced perceptual skills.[20] **Pratyahara**, the fifth limb of *Ashtanga Yoga*, connects *Bahiranga Yoga* with the *Antaranga Yoga*.

It includes three key aspects: *Indriya*, *Mana*, *Karma Pratyahara*. By practicing *Pratyahara*, individuals learn to withdraw their senses & mind from external distractions, & supervising & controlling their actions which are catastrophic for themselves & society. This is beneficial for those at risk of delinquency, helping them to avoid exposure to violent media & antisocial influences. It reduces impact of negative stimuli & quick responses to those stimuli, which can shape corrupting attitudes in young minds. Ultimately, *Pratyahara* teaches detachment from sources of agitation, inculcating self-awareness & self-control. Sixth limb ***Dharana*** is nothing but fixing one's concentration or focus on any point, through senses, mind & action which are withdrawn from state of bewilderment & controlled during *Pratyahara* are redirected towards positive pursuits, such as education or skill-building, art-creative expression., encouraging thoughts, constructive choices, Volunteering Community Service, environmental conservation efforts which all promotes personal growth, essential for emotional & moral development, harmonious relationships & social reintegration in juveniles. Next limb ***Dhyana*** offers continuous flow of thoughts on focused point which is achieved through *Dharana*. Meditation helps individuals to observe their thoughts, emotions, sensations, & feelings without judgment. It leads to reduced emotional outbursts, improved emotional control, better anger management, & enhanced ability to handle anxiety. For adolescents, regular mindful meditation practice can boost self-regulation, improved memory, increased efficacy & creativity, & cognitive, emotional, & behavioural flexibility. It has been shown that Meditation decreases sympathetic overstimulation (stress, trauma, & substance abuse) & leading to improvements in impulsivity, anger, depression, suicidal behaviour, self-harm. Also helps to withdraw smoking.[21,22] Research has shown Meditation practices improves telomerase; an enzyme responsible for chromosomal stability[23] thereby can alleviate biological causes of juvenile delinquency.

Last limb ***Samadhi***, a profound meditative state, is an indeed challenging for juveniles to achieve, but with daily, consistent meditation practice, it can gradually lead to a state of heightened awareness or super consciousness. In this state, delinquents can gain deeper insight into their thought patterns and emotional responses.

By observing their thoughts without judgment, they begin to break the cycle of reactive behaviours, recognizing the root causes of their actions. Over the time, this self-realisation empowers them to make more thoughtful choices, manages stress more effectively, and cultivates a sense of accountability towards their actions. As they progress in their practice, they may develop a stronger sense of purpose, lasting to personal transformation and rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Juvenile delinquency is a multifaceted issue influenced by biological, social, and psychological factors, necessitating comprehensive approaches for both prevention and rehabilitation. Integrating *Yoga* practices, particularly the eightfold path of *Ashtanga Yoga*, offers a well-rounded solution by promoting discipline, emotional balance, and self-awareness among at-risk youth. The practices of ***Yama*** and ***Niyama*** address social causes and enhance social health dimension, while ***Asanas*** and ***Pranayama*** support physical, mental, and emotional well-being. ***Pratyahara*** fosters self-control, and ***Dharana***, ***Dhyana***, and ***Samadhi*** elevates spiritual and mental health, which in turn positively impacts on social health. These practices not only tackle the root causes of delinquency but also contributes to the overall well-being, ethical growth and moral development of young individuals, helping them to grow into healthier, more responsible citizens. Thus, suggesting that incorporating *Ashtanga Yoga* into juvenile justice interventions can provide long-term benefits, promoting peace, discipline, and self-control, & thus reducing propensity for delinquency.

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