CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
Younger generation in any nation signifies strength and stamina. As it forms the future citizens of the nation, the progress and prosperity of the country rests upon the valuable contribution they make. As they progress from childhood to adulthood they hold various responsible positions. They enter into different walks of life after the formal education. The balance is upset sometimes because of the undesirable modes of behavior exhibited by few children. Children due to some reason or other resort to illegitimate means to satisfy certain economic, social and psychological needs. The delinquent acts committed by children lead to irreparable personal suffering and a colossal loss to the society.

Juvenile delinquency is a global problem which is engaging the attention of psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and others from the related branches of knowledge. Considerable
research work has been attempted in the field and a lot of literature has been gathered to focus the attention upon the various causative factors responsible for the origin of delinquency among children. Despite this, the problem remains the same and no dramatic revelation has been made to focus the attention on the actual reasons for the onset of this antisocial behavior.

It is pertinent to mention here that a crime does not develop in vacuum. It originates in the social milieu. In the modern scientific and technological society so many changes are creeping into the life of the people. The relationships between people have become more and more formal. This has resulted in the feeling of isolation in the minds of individuals. Opportunities are very limited in number for the satisfaction of the emotional and psychological needs of children. This is the important cause for the rapidly increasing tendency on the part of the children to resort to acts of delinquency. Educationists, social reformers, administrators and others are mainly concerned with this malady. Their concern is to invent the methods
and modes of preventing juvenile delinquency apart from curing it when once it originates. This is made possible when we are able to know in advance whether the child has a tendency to become a delinquent i.e., his delinquency proneness. If proper assessment of delinquency proneness is made, it will be possible to implement remedial measures and to check this menace in its primary inception.

Quay and Peterson (1960) have said that "over the long range period the only satisfactory treatment of delinquency will be the prevention of delinquency through the understanding of the psychological and sociological causes of delinquent behavior and through early identification of the delinquent prone. Early recognition of the delinquent prone permits attempts to establish preventive measures tailored to meet individual needs. Abrahamsen (1960) says, "The earlier we discover antisocial signs and mental or emotional difficulties, the better chance we have combating them."
Kvaraceus (1960) states that early identification and referral of pre-delinquent and delinquent children must be done systematically. He suggests that prevention cannot be achieved unless efforts are made to identify early "those children whose deviations in home, family, school, and neighbourhood promise future hazards or difficulties in personal adjustment."

An understanding of the proneness of juvenile delinquency is beset with several practical implications. One important practical step lies in resorting to remedial measures in order to curb this deviant behavior and to nip it in the budding stage itself. If appropriate assessment is made about the vulnerability of the child to develop delinquent tendency, proper precautionary measures may be utilized to set right the individual and see that he becomes a respectable member in the society. This is a very important attempt whereby a clear perspective is obtained regarding the problem of delinquency, viewing it from different angles and solving it by undertaking appropriate measures.
Then only society will be ridden of this social pathology.

Before proceeding to the causative theories of delinquency and various approaches to explain it, it is better to define the term "delinquency". As defined by Coleman (1969) "Delinquency refers to behavior by youths under 18 years of age which is not acceptable to society and is generally regarded as calling for some kind of admonishment, punishment or corrective action. Thus, delinquent behavior may range from truancy, "incorrigibility", and the use of illegal drugs to homicide and other serious criminal offences. To quote Quay (1965) "The delinquent would be a person whose misbehavior is a relatively serious legal offence, which is inappropriate to his level of development". According to Child (1973) "A delinquent act is any behavior on the part of a juvenile (under eighteen years of age) to which the more senior members of a society object."

In his book "Juvenile delinquency and its origin" Johnson E. Richard (1979) described three
major theoretical perspectives on juvenile delinquency. The first theory comprises the 'strain' explanation of adolescent law violation as supported by Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), Cloward and Ohlin (1960). According to this view law violation by adolescents is caused by frustration or deprivation due to adverse social conditions. Even Lemert (1967) attributes delinquency causation to the perceived defects in the social environment and value pluralism of complex societies.

The second view explains that the disposition to deviate arises due to the discrepancy between the norms and expectations of one's associates and those of the society. Affiliational causal processes are considered to be responsible for delinquency. This is especially stressed by Matza (1964, 1969). He contends that the misconduct of the individuals is caused by certain circumstances and conditions which drift the individual. Here stress is laid on the importance of subculture orientations. In other words, interpersonal conditions are attributed to cause disposition to deviate.
The third major orientation is what is called 'control' theory. Hirschi (1969) gave importance to the causal influence of delinquent associates. "Affective ties to parents, success in school, involvement in school activities, high occupational and educational aspirations, and belief in the moral validity of conventional norms" lead to the decline of delinquent behaviour. As Schrag (1971) held, "Control theories focus attention on the dynamics of the interactional processes by which people move towards and beyond the brink of deviant behaviour".

While elaborating on the theories of etiology of juvenile delinquency, Quay (1965) elaborated the biological, psychological, sociological theories apart from the outmoded religious views. The biological factors stress the role played by endocrine imbalance and constitutional factors in the individual’s criminal behaviour. The psychological theories ascribed delinquency to disturbances in the interpersonal relationship, especially parent-child relationship. The remedy lies in the utilization of effective methods of psychotherapeutic intervention. The sociological theories emphasize
on the importance of social forces in causing delinquent behavior. Durkheim (1897, 1898) and Merton (1957) dealt on the disturbance in the social structure.

Child (1973) recognized three approaches to the understanding of juvenile delinquency. These are 1) family influences, 2) personality factors and 3) sociological or situational influences. Under the first category family conflict occupies an important place. Broken homes, poverty, immorality, drunkenness, defective home management etc., will precipitate delinquent behavior.


Though a lot of empirical literature is available on the causation of delinquency, the phenomenon is not completely understood in its proper perspective. Some confusion still exists with regard to the clear understanding of juvenile delinquency. Proper understanding leads to proper
prediction and control. Nagel (1968) aptly pointed out "when a behavioral scientist wishes to bring about desired changes in behavior, he must be able to identify the factors affecting the behavior or, more plainly, the causes of the behavior."

All the attempts to explain juvenile delinquency aimed at the minimization or prevention of the antisocial behavior in the children. The problem assumed the dimension of added importance in a democratic country like India which attempts to utilize human resources for the progress and prosperity of the society.

In view of the fact that the causative factors of delinquency are not completely explained, an attempt is made here to attack the problem simultaneously from different angles. Here an attempt is made to study the impact of social and psychological variables on delinquency proneness. The variables whose influences are studied include neuroticism, mental ability, schooling, broken home conditions, size of the family, order of birth, disharmony
between parents, and quarrels among siblings. Therefore, the present investigation is conceived as "certain psycho-social factors of delinquency proneness among school going and non-school going children." The simultaneous influence as well as the individual influence of the variables in question upon the delinquent proneness is studied here instead of the actual delinquent behavior. The added advantage in this study is that the predisposition to delinquency and its related variables are investigated using multiple regression analysis and other statistical techniques.

The practical utility of this investigation lies in the proper assessment of the role played by different socio-psychological factors causing deviant behavior among children. When proper understanding of the root causes of delinquency proneness are highlighted, proper steps can be taken to prevent the onset of delinquency. Implementation of these findings makes these children opportunity conscious before tending towards deviant behavior from the established
social order. This approach towards a plan of action which creates social harmony and stability in group behavior. Thus the present investigation is beset with practical implications in practical life.