



CRIMINOLOGICAL FEATURES OF YOUTH CRIME, MECHANISMS FOR ITS PREVENTION, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency remains one of the most pressing challenges facing modern society. This article examines the criminological characteristics of youth crime, identifying its structural features, typological patterns, and principal risk factors. The analysis then turns to prevention: what mechanisms have the strongest empirical support, where systemic gaps persist, and why criminal justice responses alone consistently fail to produce durable reductions in offending. Finally, the article evaluates the role of educational influence measures — from school-based programmes and vocational training to mentorship and restorative justice — assessing their documented effectiveness, conditions for success, and the limits of the current evidence base. The central argument is that sustainable crime reduction among youth requires integrated, early-stage intervention grounded in criminological understanding, not reactive punishment.

ПРОБЛЕМЫ СОВРЕМЕННОГО МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ЧАСТНОГО ПРАВА: ЗАЩИТА ПРАВА ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЙ СОБСТВЕННОСТИ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМ ПРАВЕ

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ABSTRACT

Ювенальная преступность остается одной из самых актуальных проблем, стоящих перед современным обществом. В данной статье рассматриваются криминологические характеристики молодежной преступности, выявляются ее структурные особенности, типологические закономерности и основные факторы риска. Затем анализ переходит к



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Преступность несовершеннолетних, преступность молодежи, криминологические особенности, факторы риска, механизмы предупреждения преступности, первичная, вторичная и третичная профилактика, образовательное вмешательство, социальное и эмоциональное воспитание, восстановительная юстиция, семейная среда, социальное неравенство, раннее вмешательство, система правосудия в отношении несовершеннолетних.

профилактике: какие механизмы имеют наиболее сильную эмпирическую поддержку, где сохраняются системные пробелы и почему только меры уголовного правосудия неизменно не приводят к долгосрочному сокращению преступности. Наконец, в статье оценивается роль мер образовательного воздействия - от школьных программ и профессиональной подготовки до наставничества и восстановительного правосудия - с оценкой их документированной эффективности, условий успеха и пределов существующей доказательной базы. Основной аргумент заключается в том, что устойчивое снижение преступности среди молодежи требует комплексного, раннего вмешательства, основанного на криминологическом понимании, а не на реактивном наказании.

YOSHLAR JINOYATCHILIGINING KRIMINOLOGIK XUSUSIYATLARI, UNING PROFILAKTIKASI, TARBIVAVIY TA'SIRNING SAMARADORLIGI CHORALAR

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ABSTRACT

Voyaga yetmaganlar jinoyatchiligi zamonaviy jamiyat oldida turgan eng dolzarb muammolardan biri bo'lib qolmoqda. Ushbu maqolada yoshlar jinoyatchiligining kriminologik xususiyatlari o'rganilib, uning tarkibiy xususiyatlari, tipologik qonuniyatlari va asosiy xavf omillari aniqlangan. So'ngra tahlil profilaktikaga qaratiladi: qaysi mexanizmlar eng kuchli empirik qo'llab-quvvatlashga ega, tizimli bo'shliqlar qayerda saqlanib qolmoqda va nima uchun faqat jinoiy adliya choralari doimiy ravishda huquqbuzarliklarni uzoq muddatli kamaytirishga olib kelmaydi. Nihoyat, maqolada maktab dasturlari va kasbiy tayyorgarlikdan tortib murabbiylik va tiklovchi odil sudlovgacha bo'lgan ta'limga ta'sir ko'rsatish



tengsizlik, erta aralashuv, voyaga yetmaganlar odil sudlov tizimi.

choralarining roli, ularning hujjatlashtirilgan samaradorligi, muvaffaqiyat shartlari va mavjud dalillar bazasining chegaralari baholanadi. Asosiy dalil shundan iboratki, yoshlar o'rtasida jinoyatchilikni barqaror kamaytirish uchun reaktiv jazo emas, balki kriminologik tushunishga asoslangan integratsiyalashgan, erta bosqichdagi aralashuv talab etiladi.

Juvenile delinquency, understood in criminological terms, encompasses socially dangerous acts committed by persons below the age of majority typically defined as under 18 years that violate criminal law norms. What distinguishes youth crime as a criminological category is not merely the age of the offender but the qualitatively distinct social, psychological, and developmental conditions that shape offending behaviour during this period.

Adolescence constitutes a critical transitional phase in which identity formation, peer influence, impulsivity, and susceptibility to external pressures are heightened. The developing prefrontal cortex the neurological substrate of impulse control, risk assessment, and long-term planning does not reach full maturity until the mid-twenties. This biological reality has significant implications for how criminologists and policymakers should understand both the causes of youth offending and the appropriate societal response.

Structural Features and Typological Patterns

Youth crime exhibits several distinctive structural characteristics that

set it apart from adult offending: Group character: A disproportionate share of juvenile offences estimates in the criminological literature range from 50% to 80% depending on the offence category are committed in groups. Peer dynamics and collective identity function both as motivating and reinforcing forces, meaning that intervention with any single individual must account for their social network. Situational spontaneity: Many juvenile offences are opportunistic rather than premeditated.¹Theft, vandalism, assault, and substance-related offences frequently arise from situational prompts boredom, peer pressure, or the sudden availability of an unguarded target rather than deliberate criminal planning. Concentration in specific offence types: Property crime theft, robbery, burglary and public order offences dominate juvenile crime statistics across jurisdictions. Violent offences are comparatively less prevalent but carry higher individual and social costs and are associated with more entrenched trajectories of offending. Geographic concentration: Youth crime clusters in specific urban environments areas characterised by high population density,

¹ Andrews, D.A. & Bonta, J. (2010). The Psychology of Criminal Conduct (5th ed.). LexisNexis.



weak institutional presence, concentrated poverty, and residential transience. These patterns reflect the structural conditions that generate delinquency rather than the inherent characteristics of individuals within those areas. Recidivism risk gradient: First-time juvenile offenders with strong family ties, school engagement, and no history of trauma carry low recidivism risk. Those with multiple risk factors, early onset offending, and prior justice contact carry substantially higher risk underscoring the importance of early, differentiated intervention.

Principal Risk Factors

Criminological research consistently identifies a layered ecology of risk factors operating at the individual, family, peer, school, community, and societal levels: Impulsivity, low self-control, early onset of conduct problems, learning difficulties, substance use, and a history of trauma or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are among the most reliably documented individual-level predictors of delinquency. Importantly, none of these factors operates deterministically each elevates risk within a broader ecological context. Parental criminality, inconsistent or harsh discipline, neglect, domestic violence, and the absence of adequate supervision are among the strongest family-level predictors. The family is the primary site of early socialisation the formation of norms, values, and emotional regulation capacities that shape subsequent behaviour across all domains of life. ²Association with

delinquent peers is one of the most powerful proximal predictors of youth offending. At the community level, concentrated poverty, neighbourhood disorder, weak social cohesion, limited access to legitimate economic opportunity, and high exposure to criminal role models compound individual and family vulnerabilities. Structural inequality in income, education, housing, and health forms the backdrop against which individual risk factors exert their influence.

Prevention Mechanisms

Prevention operates according to a straightforward logic: the earlier the intervention relative to the onset of a risk trajectory, the lower the cost and the higher the likely effectiveness. This principle, while intuitive, runs against the dominant institutional tendency to invest in criminal justice response rather than upstream prevention. The result, documented across multiple national contexts, is that societies consistently spend more on processing and incarcerating young offenders than on preventing the conditions that produced them. Criminologists distinguish three tiers of prevention: primary prevention targets the general population with measures to reduce the conditions that generate crime; secondary prevention focuses on individuals or groups identified as at elevated risk; and tertiary prevention addresses those who have already offended, aiming to reduce reoffending and facilitate reintegration.

The most durable reductions in youth crime occur where primary

² Bronfenbrenner, U. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press



prevention addresses structural conditions. Early childhood programmes such as high-quality preschool provision, home visiting for at-risk families, and parenting support produce documented long-term reductions in delinquency. Longitudinal data from multiple countries demonstrate that investments in the first five years of life yield returns in reduced crime, educational attainment, and labour market participation that significantly outweigh their initial costs.³ Environmental design reducing physical conditions that facilitate opportunistic crime constitutes another dimension of primary prevention with a strong evidence base. Improvements in public lighting, the activation of communal spaces, and the reduction of abandoned or deteriorated urban environments have produced consistent reductions in youth crime in areas where they have been systematically implemented. Secondary prevention targets individuals and groups where risk factors have been identified but offending has not yet occurred or is at an early stage. Effective secondary prevention programmes share several features: they are strengths-based rather than deficit-focused; they engage families, not just individual young people; they are delivered by trained practitioners with adequate resources and supervision; and they incorporate mechanisms for monitoring outcomes and adjusting delivery. Among the most consistently effective secondary prevention approaches are structured mentorship

programmes, cognitive-behavioural skills training, family intervention programmes, and multi-systemic therapy (MST), which simultaneously addresses functioning across family, peer, school, and community domains. The evidence on diversion schemes routing young people away from formal justice processes at first or early contact is also strong, provided diversion connects to meaningful support rather than simply delaying formal sanction. Tertiary prevention addresses those who have already entered the justice system. The central challenge at this stage is reducing reoffending while supporting the developmental trajectory of young people whose lives have been disrupted by contact with the criminal justice system. The evidence is unambiguous that incarceration of juveniles particularly in custodial facilities that mix high-risk and lower-risk young people tends to increase rather than decrease reoffending. Exposure to more experienced offenders, disruption of education, family, and community ties, and the labelling effects of criminal justice contact all compound risk. Where custodial sentences are unavoidable, the evidence points clearly toward small therapeutic units, intensive educational and vocational programming, and robust post-release support as the conditions under which reintegration is most likely to succeed. Restorative justice approaches which bring together offenders, victims, and community representatives to address harm and agree on reparative action show

³ Lipsey, M.W. (2009). The primary factors that characterise effective interventions with

juvenile offenders. *Victims and Offenders*, 4(2), 124–147.



consistent positive results at the tertiary level, including reduced reoffending, higher victim satisfaction, and lower system costs compared to conventional prosecution and sentencing.

Effectiveness of Educational Influence Measures

Educational intervention occupies a central place in the prevention and rehabilitation of juvenile offending for reasons that go beyond the acquisition of knowledge. School engagement functions as a protective factor, providing structure, positive peer relationships, adult mentorship, a sense of purpose, and a path toward legitimate economic participation. Conversely, school disengagement through exclusion, truancy, or dropout is one of the most consistent predictors of delinquent trajectories. Educational influence measures encompass a broad range of interventions: school climate improvement, social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes, anti-bullying initiatives, teacher training in trauma-informed practice, alternative education pathways for excluded students, vocational and technical training, and legal literacy programmes designed to build understanding of rights, responsibilities, and consequences. Social and emotional learning programmes, when implemented with fidelity across the full school community, produce consistent reductions in aggression, conduct problems, and risk-taking behaviour all of which are proximal predictors of delinquency.⁴ Meta-analyses of SEL

interventions report effect sizes in the range of 0.2–0.4, which translate into meaningful population-level reductions in antisocial behaviour when programmes are delivered at scale. Legal education and civic awareness programmes designed to increase young people's knowledge of law, justice processes, and the consequences of offending show more mixed results. Studies consistently find that knowledge acquisition does not automatically translate into behaviour change. Effective programmes of this type combine legal knowledge with the development of skills decision-making, perspective-taking, conflict resolution and are embedded in wider school climate initiatives rather than delivered as standalone curricula.

Vocational Training and Alternative Education

For young people who have already disengaged from mainstream education through exclusion, dropout, or custodial experience vocational and technical training offers an evidence-supported pathway toward legitimate economic participation. Programmes that combine accredited skills training with supported transition to employment produce consistent reductions in reoffending, particularly when they address the practical barriers that deter employers from hiring young people with criminal records. Alternative education programmes designed for students who cannot be accommodated in mainstream schooling vary considerably in quality and effectiveness. The most effective

⁴ Gottfredson, M.R. & Hirschi, T. A General Theory of Crime. Stanford University Press



combine small group sizes, high staff-to-student ratios, trauma-informed practice, close family engagement, and pathways back into mainstream education or accredited vocational training. Those that function primarily as containment managing excluded students without clear educational or developmental objectives tend to produce neutral to negative outcomes.⁵

The research literature on educational influence measures identifies several conditions that determine whether interventions succeed:

- **Implementation fidelity:** Programmes delivered as designed, by trained and adequately supervised practitioners, consistently outperform the same programmes delivered informally or with significant adaptation. The gap between a programme's evidence base and its real-world effectiveness is frequently explained by implementation quality rather than programme content.
- **Dosage and timing:** Single-session awareness programmes the most commonly funded and least effective type produce negligible long-term change. Sustained, multi-component interventions delivered across the academic year and repeated across multiple school years show considerably stronger effects.
- **Integration with wider services:** Educational interventions are most effective when embedded within a coordinated system that addresses

housing, mental health, family functioning, and economic need. Schools cannot compensate in isolation for the full weight of social disadvantage.

- **Absence of net-widening:** Secondary and tertiary educational programmes risk drawing young people into structured supervision and monitoring who would otherwise have resolved their difficulties without formal intervention. Effective programmes include explicit criteria for participation and regular review of whether continued involvement remains beneficial.
- **Evaluation infrastructure:** The evidence base for educational influence measures in juvenile justice is considerably thinner than the enthusiasm for such measures would suggest. Many programmes are funded and delivered without robust evaluation. Where evaluations exist, follow-up periods are frequently too short to capture long-term reoffending outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of criminological characteristics of youth crime, prevention mechanisms, and the effectiveness of educational measures, the following recommendations are proposed: First, governments should prioritize **early-stage prevention** by investing in early childhood development programmes, parenting support, and family-based interventions. Evidence consistently shows that addressing risk factors at an early stage significantly reduces the likelihood of future delinquency. Second, it is essential

⁵ Zehr, H. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Revised ed.). Good Books. UNODC (2023). *Handbook on the Crime*

Prevention Guidelines. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.



to strengthen **multi-agency cooperation** between schools, law enforcement bodies, social services, and community organizations. A coordinated and integrated approach allows for more effective identification of at-risk youth and ensures timely intervention. Third, educational institutions should expand the implementation of **social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes** and adopt trauma-informed practices. These approaches help develop self-control, decision-making skills, and resilience, which are key protective factors against criminal behaviour.

Conclusion

Juvenile delinquency is neither a mystery nor an inevitability. Its criminological characteristics the structural patterns, typological features, and layered risk factors that generate and sustain it are well understood. What remains insufficient is the consistent application of that understanding in policy and practice. Prevention works when it is sustained, integrated, and

adequately resourced. Educational influence measures work when they are implemented faithfully, delivered at sufficient dosage, and embedded within a broader ecosystem of family, community, and social support. What consistently fails is the reactive model: investing primarily in detection, prosecution, and incarceration while underinvesting in the conditions and capacities that prevent young people from reaching the justice system in the first place. The criminological evidence supports a reorientation of resources and institutional attention toward early, developmental, and educational approaches. This is not an argument for leniency it is an argument for effectiveness. Societies that treat youth crime as a symptom of structural conditions, addressable through investment in young people's development, consistently achieve better outcomes than those that treat it as a moral failure requiring punishment.

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