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ABOUT US

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

LEGAL

ASSESSING THE EFFICACY OF REHABILITATIVE VERSUS RETRIBUTIVE APPROACHES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS

AUTHORED BY - MANIKA VARSHNEY & TANMAY TRIPATHI.

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Abstract

Juvenile delinquency presents a major challenge to contemporary systems of crime, forcing them to answer difficult questions on the right treatment of juveniles who commit crimes. From these two approaches, the **rehabilitative** and **the retributive models**, along with the forms embedded in the frameworks, have defined the juvenile justice systems. The first is seen as endorsing punishment and deterrence, while the latter focuses on the improvement of young offenders through schooling, counselling, and reintegration back to society. Under dispositions of retributive justice, such as those which view the juvenile as liable as an adult, while the rehabilitative approach sees and recognizes the fact that the individual is still developing and might change positively.

The study critically assesses the impact of rehabilitative and retributive approaches under juvenile justice systems, along with long-term effects, such as recidivism rates, mental effects, and social reintegration. The observer draws upon doctrinal felony research and a comparative evaluation of legislative frameworks and practices in jurisdictions like India, the USA, and Norway. International conventions, like those by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) or the Beijing Rules, are analysed to evaluate the world's standards.

It indicates that diversionary alternatives are usually more rehabilitative as opposed to penal systems in terms of reducing recidivism and fostering developmental humanism as a punishment-restricted outcome to crime. The study suggests that such a balanced, reformative framework, with restorative ideas well supported by good enough infrastructure, becomes a constant hallmark of justice and reintegration for juvenile offenders.

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1. INTRODUCTION

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a. Background

The juvenile justice systems around the world have drastically changed over the past century. The designs for juvenile justice originated from the adult system of punishment and heavily emphasized imposing deterrent punishment for the pain of any juvenile misdeeds. However, after understanding more and more about the foundations of child psychology and developmental science, the focus turned toward rehabilitation and addressing causes, so that juvenile delinquent actions may be positively redirected.

Therefore, in legislation, juveniles were treated just like any adults, and the conventions of justice were applied to them in every respect in the law. They received the same treatment as adults in the manner underlying classical criminology, wherein the child, in a way, was seen as a rational actor capable of understanding the consequences of his actions and deserving of punishment in proportion to his actions. In particular, it was through the evaluation of these systems by reformers, social workers, and legal scholars that the consequences of the due process were increasingly subjected to scrutiny. It was, in fact, those insights concerning the psychological trauma put in place by such systems, increased recidivism, and social stigmatization that initiated the serious critical evaluation of this way of thinking.

From the late 19th century and earlier into the 20th century, countries such as the US (with the Chicago Juvenile Court, established in 1899) began to experience specialized juvenile courts, based primarily on the assumption that these courts were to be governed by rehabilitative philosophy. Within this thinking, supposedly malleable children would be redirected, educated, and morally directed away from deviant courses of action. Internationally, such instruments as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Beijing Rules (UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice) strengthened global commitment towards a rights-based and rehabilitative juvenile justice architecture.

The focus towards rehabilitation did not come in a smooth and universal vector. Responding to increasing juvenile crime rates, especially during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, many jurisdictions went for a much harsher option. Some of these changes in the USA and India were meant to enable the trial of juvenile offenders for violent crimes in adult courts. Much of this was pushed forward by public panic, media hype, and political agendas calling for "zero

I India boasts a hybrid model in the form of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of

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Children) Act, 2015. The Act, while maintaining that these schools for reform and care, allows

for the trial of 16 to 18-year-old children along with adults in certain serious offenses. Hence,

this dual-track has invited a ceaseless argument on its ethical, legal, and practical implications

on such combinations of the retributive and rehabilitative models.

Given the complex and evolving nature of juvenile justice, it is essential to critically assess

which approach better serves both societal and individual interests. This research explores the

efficacy of rehabilitative versus retributive models, with a focus on their long-term impact on

juvenile offenders.

b. Research Problem

Rising cases of juvenile crime, especially in terms of violent offenses, have reopened the debate

on the efficacy of prevailing justice models. While policymakers, legal scholars, and child

rights advocates have argued about the deterrent potential of punishment as compared to that

of rehabilitative intervention in Behaviour modification, there is no consensus on the road to

carve between eminent societal protection and the right of the children in conflict with the law.

c. Objectives of the Study

• To compare the efficacy of rehabilitative and retributive approaches in juvenile justice

systems.

• To analyse the long-term outcomes of these approaches in terms of recidivism,

reintegration, and behavioural reform of juvenile offenders.

To assess international legal standards and practices in shaping effective juvenile justice

models.

d. Research Questions

• Which justice model, rehabilitative or retributive, more effectively prevents recidivism

among juvenile offenders?

• How does each model impact the legal rights, psychological development, and social

rehabilitation of juveniles?

• What lessons can be drawn from comparative international practices in juvenile justice systems?

e. Hypothesis

The research posits that rehabilitative justice has better reintegration effects on juvenile offenders into society, resulting in lower recidivism rates compared with retributive models, with emphasis on education, counselling, and community involvement. Rehabilitation targets the cause of delinquency to foster long-term positive behaviour change rather than punitive deterrence.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

a. Definition of Key Terms

Juvenile Criminality

Juvenile delinquency refers to the act of committing crimes or engaging in antisocial behaviour under the age of 18. If such activity includes the commission of criminal offenses or status crimes (like truancy), or deviant acts harmful to societal norms. The law treats juvenile criminals differently because of age and their likelihood of rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation here means the use of direct techniques to reform an offending juvenile's behaviour by making use of education, psychological counselling, vocational training, and social reintegration. It does address the fact that behaviours can be understood from their point of origin, which can keep the teenager from committing any future offenses by remedying the personal and social factors that have contributed in the past.

Retribution

Retaliation in concept is to serve following the sin or suffer ample penance for the crimes considered. Therefore, it is related to the punishment in proportion to the severity of the crime, realized in moral accountability, where in structures of wrongful act, culprits must "pay" for the crime committed. Thus, under juvenile justice, this is penalized by mostly treating juveniles as adults with very severe penalties to deter them.

Recidivism

This is a crime that is being committed again and again. It is also termed as recidivism, an

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excellent technique by which the performance of criminal justice in terms of success could be

assessed in terms of it. In contrast to successful rehabilitation, the recidivism rate is generally

lower.

Restorative Justice

restorative justice; it is an alternative way of dealing with crime, be it families or the harms

resulting from crime. Restoration rather than punishment is accomplished through dialogue

between actors, victims, communities, and accountability, all in favour of empathy and

reconciliation.

b. Theoretical Foundations

Classical Theory (Retribution)

The classical criminology was an offshoot of the works of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy

Bentham, and under that theory, it views the individual as a rational actor capable of choice.

Crime thus calls for punishment that is proportionate, swift, and certain to deter individuals

from committing crimes in the future. The classical school provides the foundations of

retributive justice by increasingly stressing free will and personal responsibility.

Positivist Theory (Rehabilitation)

Emerging in the 19th century, the positivist school, led by criminals like Cesare Lombroso and

Enrico Ferri, holds that criminal behaviour results from biological, psychological, and societal

factors that the individual cannot control. The theory then seeks to support rehabilitation since

it stands for treatment and correction, rather than punishment.

Labelling Theory

Sociologists like Howard Becker have proposed that labelling theory argues that labels given

to an individual by society (for example, 'delinquent' or 'criminal') can come back to label that

individual and help in fulfilling that very prophecy, pushing the juvenile further into deviance.

This theory condemns penal systems more for stigmatizing young people than for rehabilitating

them.

This theory was developed by Albert Bandura and holds that behaviour is learned through the processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Juveniles often offend after observing criminal role models or criminal environments. Rehabilitation programs based on this theory aim to provide positive role models and positive environments that nurture pro-social behaviours.

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3. METHODOLOGY

Suitable to analyse the normative frameworks, legal principles, and policy orientations in juvenile justice systems, this study employs a qualitative research design. This 'evaluate and compare' method delves into the rehabilitative-or-retributive approaches of various such systems about recidivism, reintegration, and above all, the juvenile offender's protection of rights.

Method

This research is doctrinally driven and involves extensive and in-depth analytic work on the statutes, case laws, policy documents, and scholarly commentaries. It will also be compared with three jurisdictions, that is, India, the United States, and Norway, to extract best practices around juvenile justice as practiced by various countries and to highlight models that would have proven effective over time.

This doctrinal-comparative method helps to:

- Examine and interpret domestic and international laws and their practical implications.
- Identify common patterns and significant divergences across legal systems.
- Assess how different justice philosophies translate into real-world outcomes for juvenile offenders.

Sources of Data

The research relies on a wide range of **primary and secondary sources**, including:

- Statutes and Legal Instruments:
 - o Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (India)
 - o Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, 1974 (USA)
 - o Norwegian Penal Code and Child Welfare Act
 - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules)

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• Judicial Decisions:

- Indian Supreme Court and High Court rulings interpreting juvenile justice principles
- o US Supreme Court precedents (e.g., Roper v. Simmons, Graham v. Florida)
- o Norwegian judicial interpretations related to child welfare and justice

• Academic Literature and Reports:

- o Scholarly articles and books on criminology, juvenile law, and justice models
- NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau, India) statistics on juvenile crime and recidivism
- Reports and publications by UNICEF, UNODC, Human Rights Watch, and national law commissions

• Comparative Legal Studies:

- Case studies and policy evaluations of juvenile justice frameworks in each jurisdiction
- Analysis of the socio-cultural and institutional factors influencing justice delivery

Jurisdictions Selected for Comparison

- **India**: A mixed system that combines rehabilitation with retributive elements, especially after the 2015 amendment permitting juveniles aged 16–18 to be tried as adults in certain cases.
- United States: Often considered retributive in orientation, with a long history of treating juveniles harshly, although recent years have seen some reforms favouring rehabilitative programs.
- **Norway**: A highly rehabilitative model rooted in the welfare state concept, with emphasis on social support, education, and child-centred justice practices.

These countries represent a **spectrum of juvenile justice philosophies**, providing a valuable comparative context for analysing which model achieves the goals of justice, rehabilitation, and prevention most effectively.

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4. LITERATURE REVIEW

This topic has been widely debated in legal, sociological, and criminological literature in the form of approaches: rehabilitative or retributive juvenile justice. This section endeavours to review past scholarship, legal philosophies, and international frameworks to foreground a comparative analysis and propel the research argument.

1. Preceding Findings on the Effects of Both Models

Numerous empirical and doctrinal studies have addressed the impact of rehabilitative and

retributive models on juvenile offenders. The findings of the Office of Juvenile Justice and

Delinquency Prevention in the US contended that rehabilitative interventions such as family

treatment, education, and vocational training were found to reduce recidivism much more

effectively than punitive methods, which primarily used incarceration as the main control

strategy.

The studies conducted in the Indian context by organizations such as the Centre for Child and

the Law, NLSIU state that the 2015 amendment permitting trial of certain juveniles as adults

has created a chilling effect and endangered the very principles of child rights, adding to the

risk of social alienation. Compared to this, rehabilitation-oriented model countries like Norway

show some of the lowest rates for youth re-offending in their kitty, which on a broader level

hint at the long-term effectiveness of care-based interventions.

According to Lipsey, in his meta-analysis of more than 500 programs, juveniles exposed to

therapeutic and skill-building programs were much less likely to re-offend than those exposed

to punitive sessions. Growing evidence is now favouring reformative justice as relatively more

effective in changing behaviours and securing social reintegration.

2. Legal Philosophy and Critiques of Each Model

In its foundation on the classical conception of criminology, the retributive model externally

endorses punishment as morally justified and legally prescribed, which stipulates an adequate

punishment for a crime within the narrow social conception of responsibility. Justice requires

retribution for wrongdoing; as such, Immanuel Kant and H.L.A. Hart have argued. Critics hold,

however, that the retribution fails to consider the developmental immaturity and/or social

context and psychological vulnerabilities of juveniles. The harsh penalties may solidify, rather

than eliminate, deviant identities in cases where minors are housed with adults in correctional

facilities.

On the other hand, the rehabilitative model emphasizes the treatment and correction of individual behaviours based on substantive and sociological theory. Much of the theorizing on this front has been influenced by Cesare Lombroso and Auguste Comte, both of whom attributed criminal conduct to biological, psychological, or social deficiencies that could be remedied. Although excessive paternalism may undermine autonomy as avowed by some critics, this model has almost universally been accepted as more consonant with child-centred

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The very contrary rehabilitative model rests on individualized treatment and correction as informed by positivist and sociological theories. Most of the theorists in this line of thought would include the likes of Cesare Lombroso and Auguste Comte, who attributed criminal conduct to biological deficiencies, psychological deficiencies, or social deficiencies that may be remedied. While some critics would maintain that too much paternalism erodes autonomy, this model has almost universally been accepted as being most consonant with child-centred legal frameworks and developmental psychology.

Well, restorative justice was indeed the new model, but today restorative justice is mostly put together with rehabilitative ones. It is mainly about repairing the harm through communication and restitution, along with community involvement. Some, like the scholar John Braithwaite, assert that it promotes accountability without alienation and is specifically beneficial for juveniles.

3. International Best Practices and Policies

legal frameworks and developmental psychology.

International human rights instruments are strongly in favour of rehabilitation in juvenile justice:

- From the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 37 and 40 particularly highlight how juvenile offenders must be treated, i.e., in a manner compatible with his or her dignity, age, and potential for rehabilitation.
- The Beijing Rules (UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, 1985) specifically prescribe diversion from formal judicial proceedings and any form of institutionalization, instead emphasizing educational and guidance settings and restorative interventions over punishment.

Havana Rules (1990) and Riyadh Guidelines (1990) represent cognate proclivities on rehabilitation and reintegration through non-custodial measures.

This instrumentality creates a normative framework for member states, such as India and the

USA, and Norway, which has somehow even made this applicable in national policies around child rights and has implemented any non-retaliatory responses to acts of juvenile delinquency. The literature collectively suggests that **rehabilitative models** are not only aligned with international legal standards but also produce better long-term outcomes. However,

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toward retribution. This study seeks to bridge that gap by analysing how law and policy can

implementation gaps, political pressures, and public perceptions often skew justice systems

more effectively operationalize rehabilitative ideals.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This section explores the statutory and institutional frameworks governing juvenile justice, with a focus on India and a comparative overview of the United States and Norway. It also examines the influence of international norms such as the UNCRC and the Beijing Rules in shaping rehabilitative ideals.

a. Indian Legal Context

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act is the primary legislation in India in reference to juvenile justice. This Act repealed the 2000 Act and established a rehabilitative and punitive approach for some situations in the Act. The preamble of the Act provides for care, protection, development, and social integration to the commitments of the UNCRC.

The Act defines two categories of children:

- Children in conflict with the law (CCL)
- Children in need of care and protection (CNCP)

The Act mandates measures for diversion, counselling, skill training, foster care, and other non-institutional approaches for CCL.

Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)-Role

According to Section 4 of the Act, Juvenile Justice Boards are set up in each district for the disposal of cases pertaining to children in conflict with the law. Each board consists of a metropolitan or judicial magistrate and two social workers (one of whom must be a woman).

The JJB functions as a **quasi-judicial authority** aimed at:

- Conducting inquiries into juvenile offences
- Ensuring psychological assessments
- Determining whether the child should be tried as an adult (in heinous offences)

The JJB is empowered to refer children to rehabilitation programs, issue probation orders, and recommend institutional care only when necessary.

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Trial of Juveniles as Adults (Section 15)

Controversial clause introduced under section fifteen was to allow juveniles from sixteen to eighteen years of age to be tried as adults for heinous crimes if the JJB finds that the child had the mental and physical capacity to commit the crime and understands its consequences.

This displaces a wholly rehabilitative framework and was introduced in the wake of the 2012 Nirbhaya case, and the same is attracting criticism for:

Section 15 introduces a controversial clause wherein, at sixteen years of eighteen, if a child is already capable of comprehending the significance of an offense, then the JJB possesses the jurisdiction to try that child for heinous crimes as an adult.

This, moreover, displaces a completely rehabilitative framework and was introduced in reaction to the Nirbhaya case in 2012, and the same has been subject to criticism for:

- Contravening the principle of the best interest of the child
- Creating space for **retributive penalization**
- Being potentially inconsistent with India's obligations under the UNCRC

Despite procedural safeguards, critics argue that this provision risks **criminalizing vulnerable children** and exposing them to the adult criminal justice system, which may lead to **stigmatization**, **trauma**, **and higher recidivism**.

b. Comparative Analysis

United States (Retributive Tilt)

The U.S. juvenile justice system has traditionally focused on deterrence and punishment, especially during the "tough on crime" era of the late 1980s and 1990s. Several states allow juveniles to be automatically transferred to adult courts based on the crime itself.

Landmark decisions such as:

- Roper v. Simmons (2005) banned the death penalty for juveniles
- *Graham v. Florida* (2010) banning life without parole for non-homicide offenses reflects an evolving recognition of juvenile rights.

However, challenges persist:

- Overrepresentation of minority youth
- Harsh sentencing in some jurisdictions
- Limited access to rehabilitative services within juvenile detention centres

Despite reform efforts, **retributive philosophies still dominate** in many parts of the U.S., especially for serious crimes.

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Norway (Rehabilitative Tilt)

In contrast, Norway has a welfare-oriented, rehabilitative system for its juvenile justice. Juvenile offenders are generally not liable to criminal penalties, but are dealt with:

- Community-based interventions
- Social services support
- Education and vocational programs
- Mediation and restorative justice practices

Norway's **Child Welfare Act** ensures that children under 18 are treated entirely separately from the adult system. Imprisonment for juveniles, after all, is an absolute last resort and is usually avoided altogether.

The recidivism rates in Norway, among the lowest in the world, are attributable to the country\'s investment in interventions, mental health, and reintegration.

c. United Nations Guidelines and CRC

Several international instruments shape the legal and moral contours of juvenile justice globally:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) imprisonment should be the last resort. allowed to be treated in a manner appropriate to their inherent dignity and respect. (Articles 37 & 40).
- UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules, 1985) Diversion, proportionality, and alternative measures to institutionalization should be emphasized.
- The UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines, 1990) Encourage social support rather than punitive policies.
- UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules, 1990) - Create a humane, educative environment for all juveniles deprived of their freedom.

These instruments all support the idea that the main forms to maintain international standards are rehabilitative and restorative forms of justice, thus ensuring a child-friendly justice system.

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This segment delves into the succinct appraisal of the rehabilitative and retributive models in juvenile justice. It analyses their central strengths and shortcomings backed by empirical evidence and case studies, primarily focusing on trends since 2015 in India and international experiences.

It has been observed and documented here that the rehabilitative and retributive models in juvenile justice can be juxtaposed. This section examines their primary points of strengths and limitations-with supporting empirical and literary evidence and case studies-primarily on post-2015 trends in India and international endeavours.

a. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Rehabilitative Model

The rehabilitative model is based on the theory that juvenile offenders can be redeemed and that their deviant behaviours may be a product of their environment, psychological variables, and developmental factors. Thus, this model focuses on care, treatment, education, skill building, counselling, therapy, and reintegration into society.

Strengths

- Child-Centric Philosophy: The Rehabilitation model is woefully in keeping with modern jurisprudence on child rights. The model here treats the juvenile like an individual in need of more support than punishment and tries to understand the reasons for delinquency.
- **2. Reduced Recidivism:** Several studies across the jurisdictions on youths found that rehabilitation makes them less likely to re-offend. For example, the youth recidivism rate in Norway was less than 20%, compared with countries under punitive models.
- **3. Long-Term Reintegration**: Rehabilitation prepares juveniles for social reintegration through education, vocational training, and life skills. Significant success has been gained in changing at-risk youth into responsible citizens through community service, restorative justice circles, and mentorships.
- **4. Restorative Potential**: This model promotes responsibility in offenders and a feeling of consideration for them. Victim-offender mediation or community restitution programs help heal both victims and offenders.

Weaknesses

1. Resource Intensive: Rehabilitation schemes consume personnel such as trained counsellors, psychologists, social workers, and infrastructural needs, inclusive of continuous investment. Many developing countries, including India, suffer from a deficit of resource inputs to operate such systems fully.

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- **2. Implementation Irregularities:** Even where laws are framed positively, the conditions in juvenile homes and observation facilities tend to be corrupt and poorly trained, and monitored.
- **3. Public Misconception**: The rehabilitative justice system can often be misconceived as being "soft on crime", especially during cases of high-profile crimes. Such perceptions may tend to create political pressure to impose harsher laws, as manifested in the 2015 amendment in India.

b. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Retributive Model

The retributive model views the idea of justice as requiring a punishment in proportion to the actual harm inflicted by the wrongdoer. In turn, this was said to be underpinned by deterrence, incapacitation, and retributive fairness.

Strengths

- Deterrence-Oriented: Simultaneously with the intended moral argument for retribution, it functions to deter potential offenders. The imposition of severe punishment will act as a warning to deter criminal activity.
- 2. **Public Justice Perception:** Retributive justice gives what feels like justice and vengeance to society, especially in crimes that evoke emotion or are particularly heinous. Public satisfaction is crucial, especially in democratic contexts in which legislators are sensitive to the electorate.
- 3. **Ease of Implementation**: Retributive justice often has a more straightforward scheme of sentencing than rehabilitative efforts that require multiple agencies involved and are therefore administratively simpler.

Weaknesses

1. **Increased Recidivism**: According to empirical evidence, juveniles who have undergone the experience of punitive justice, particularly incarceration, recidivate at much higher rates. That even as their criminal identity is reinforced by being alone in detention, they distance themselves from the social network capable of supporting them.

2. **Psychological and Emotional Damage**: Such young offenders are likely to suffer psychological difficulties in the long term, stemming from emotional trauma inflicted by demanding conditions, stigmatization, or lack of therapeutic input.

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3. **Poor in Addressing the Root** Causes: Retribution concerns itself with punishment at the expense of all the root causes of offending-poverty, abuse, mental illness, and lack of education-in that it cannot work long term.

c. Empirical Evidence

A critical comparison of empirical data helps assess the real-world implications of both models.

India's Post-2015 Trends

After the **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**, came into force, allowing for juveniles aged 16–18 to be tried as adults for heinous crimes, there was an **uptick in public demand for retributive justice**, particularly after the Nirbhaya case.

However, NCRB data reveals that:

- The rate of juvenile crimes has not significantly decreased post-2015.
- Trial as adults remains rare, but when it happens, rehabilitative options are lost for those juveniles.
- Overcrowded and underfunded juvenile homes often fail to provide the therapeutic and developmental services needed.

Case Studies & Reports

- 1. **Bal Swaraj Portal (NCPCR)**: Many of these juveniles thus remain confined in observation homes, and they fail to benefit from education, counselling, or legal advocacy that would help to realize rehabilitation.
- 2. **Mukesh Kumar v. State of Chhattisgarh (2019)**: This put forward a balanced view and underscored the need to emphasize instilling constructive changes in first-time offenders rather than for revenge.
- 3. US Studies: Not only within Missouri, this model in the United States also recommends small facilities, tailored plans, and a bottom-up community approach. The results of the model showed resounding efficacy when compared to the usual juvenile detention centres in terms of recidivism rate reductions.
- 4. **Norway's Youth Restorative Program**: A longitudinal study of offenders in Oslo revealed that 85% of juveniles undergoing restorative justice **did not reoffend within five years**, pointing to the efficacy of supportive, non-punitive frameworks.

Conclusion of Analysis

From the analysis, it becomes evident that **rehabilitative justice**, **while more resource-intensive**, **is better aligned with human rights obligations**, **child psychology**, **and long-term societal goals**. Retributive models may provide temporary satisfaction or deterrence, but fail to address the complexities of juvenile offending and often lead to **repeated cycles of criminality**.

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In the next section, the paper will offer recommendations for legal and policy reforms based on this evidence-backed analysis.

Aspect	Rehabilitative Model	Retributive Model
Philosophical Basis	Reform-oriented, child-centric, focuses on reintegration and individual potential	Punishment-oriented, focuses on proportional justice and deterrence
Core Strategies	Counselling, education, therapy, vocational training, and restorative justice	Detention, imprisonment, trial as adults, fixed sentencing
Strengths	 Addresses root causes of crime Reduces recidivism Encourages reintegration Upholds child rights 	 Satisfies public demand for justice Deterrent effect (perceived) Easier to implement procedurally
Weaknesses	Resource-intensiveNeeds skilled professionalsOften poorly implemented	
India Post-2015 Trends	 Some emphasis on rehabilitation under the JJ Act 2015 Limited success due to poor infrastructure 	(16–18) to be tried as adults - No significant drop-in

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Empirical Evidence –	- Bal Swaraj Portal reports poor	- Juveniles tried as adults show
India	implementation	no deterrent impact
	- Observation homes lack	- SC cautions against overuse
	resources	(Mukesh Kumar case)
International	- Focus on education, community	- Rarely used; Norway avoids
Example – Norway	engagement, and counselling	punitive approaches for
	- Recidivism below 20%	juveniles
International	- Some reform models, like the	- Retributive tilt in many states
Example – USA	Missouri Model successful	- High recidivism among
	- Shows lower recidivism	juveniles tried as adults
Long-Term Outcome	Social reintegration, productive	Increased criminal behaviours,
	citizenship, and emotional	social alienation, lifelong
	rehabilitation	stigma
Compatibility with	High – aligns with principles of	Low – often violates the
UNCRC & Beijing	the best interest of the child,	mandates of rehabilitation and
Rules	minimum incarceration	minimal use of detention

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7. FINDINGS

The following details the results of the comparative analysis conducted on rehabilitative and retributive models. These results are derived solely from the analysis of existing empirical evidence, case studies, and legal frameworks.

a. Comparative Effectiveness in Reducing Repeat Offenses

One of the primary goals of juvenile justice systems around the world is to reduce the tendency of juveniles to reoffend. The results reveal:

Rehabilitative Model:

- Long-term effectiveness: Meanwhile, adopt rehabilitative policies such as Norway or Germany, which show low recidivism rates. One of the best places in the world is Norway, which records a recidivism rate of only 20% for juveniles. Most of this is dependent on anything from education, skill training, community integration, and mental health support.
- Success of Diversion Programs: In the comparative analysis of the intervention programs and facilities for the youth from the perspective of rehabilitation, it was found

that a model quite like that of Missouri in the USA shows repeated delinquencies following the use of diversion programs as well as a state-run juvenile facility. Restorative justice programs have the potential for great success in getting juveniles out of the adult criminal justice system and reducing recidivism rates.

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Retributive Model:

- High Recidivism: Juvenile offenders tried in courts under the retributive model, especially where incarceration also leads to punishment, correlate with higher rates of recidivism in contrast. The National Institute of Justice in the USA established that juveniles tried under adult law were more predisposed to commit crimes again than their counterparts dealt with in the juvenile system. This historic isolation from rehabilitation opportunities enfolds the idea of self as a criminal.
- **Deterrence Myth**: The deterrent argument put forth by proponents of retributive models is unsupported by empirical evidence. That is, the attention given to sensationalized high-profile cases and the adultification of juvenile offenders in itself would not lead to a reduction in juvenile crime in most jurisdictions, including India.

b. Impact on Juvenile Psychology

The psychological impact of both models on juvenile offenders is significant and has long-term consequences.

Rehabilitative Model:

- Effects Psychologically Positive: Rehabilitation approaches have certain positive psycho-social effects on juveniles. They include rehabilitation therapy, counselling, and social services that assist juveniles in admittance to issues such as trauma, substance abuse, or even family dysfunction.
- Restorative Practices: Dialogue-based restorative justice programs facilitate a
 resolution of a conflict between a victim and an offender and lead to an increase in
 empathy, accountability, and self-esteem.
- Reduced Stigmatization: By being under rehabilitation, it reduces the chances of labelling juveniles as "criminals" or having unrecovered chances of reintegration into the community.

Retributive Model:

• **Psychological Harm**: Punitive measures, however, produce grave psychological damage for a juvenile who is tried as an adult or placed in an adult facility. Studies have

shown that juveniles condemned to incarceration suffer from grave psychological disorders like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

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Alienation and stigma: A punitive model can also internalize criminal behaviours.
 Such identification reinforces the hurtful gender-based perception that criminalization serves to allocate to children treated as adults. This also hence, translates into long-term mental damage.

c. Public Perception vs Actual Outcomes

Public Perception:

- **Demand for Retributive Justice**: In the case of high-profile crimes, especially those involving violence or sexual assault, the public tends to favour the retributive model. When public sentiment considers the crime as especially horrible or the offender as a juvenile, it is likely to favour punitive measures.
- **Media Influence**: Media reporting may heighten public fears and shift calls for punishment toward victim rights and away from rehabilitation, creating a situation in which the perception of the public is, at least in the minds of many, unduly influenced by emotions rather than any objective evidence on the effectiveness of punishment.

Actual Outcomes:

- Ineffectiveness of Retribution in Preventing Reoffending: Retributive justice, despite high public regard, seldom works to avert future crimes. Research across jurisdictions indicates that increasing punishment severity, such as through long-term incarceration, does not result in improved outcomes and often aggravates the situation.
- Rehabilitation as the True Solution: In reality, the result of countries applying a rehabilitative approach to the treatment of delinquent offenders is that recidivism can be lowered and the roots of delinquent behaviour confronted more effectively. Such jurisdictions show improved reintegration results, reduced crime rates, and more stable psychological states in juvenile offenders.

d. Balancing Justice for Victims with Offender Rights

Brian Boynton and Larry Schall (2011) emphasize upholding the due process rights of the juvenile offender while also considering the just needs and rights of the victim.

Rehabilitative Model:

• Victim-Centred Restorative Justice: Restorative justice practices address the concerns of the victim in the context of healing, accountability, and restoration. These

practices encourage a mutual understanding of reconciliation between the offender and victim, which becomes an essential healing process for both.

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• **Rights of the Offender**: It either needs via repression, or emerge the pressures of society or family, instead of other penalizing measures within an understanding rehabilitative model. The model attempts to treat the offender as a juvenile and develop according to what stage he is at in terms of development, and not subject him to harsh, inappropriate punishment.

Retributive Model:

- **Victim Satisfaction**: While retributive justice might give some sense of satisfaction to victims, as well as some measure of catharsis for members of society, it does not treat the underlying causes of crime. This may result in victims thinking justice is done while failing to address the prevention of future offences or the rehabilitation of the offender.
- **Risks to Offender Rights**: Often, the retributive model tends to contradict the essence of the fundamental rights of the juvenile or requires them to be tried as adults, where they are subjected to a sentence of imprisonment without an offer of rehabilitation or an education programme.

Conclusion of Findings

The findings are that, although the punitive model may give an impression of immediate justice, it does not prevent re-offenses and usually causes damage to the psychological being of the juvenile offender. The rehabilitative model, however, although suffering challenges with resource allocation and implementation, has shown far better results in reducing recidivism, psychological healing, and reintegration into society.

The transition towards a more rehabilitative juvenile justice system is not only a question of ethics, but also presents a practical solution to the continuous challenge of juvenile delinquency.

8. CONCLUSION

***** Reaffirmation of Hypothesis

The introduction of this study proposed a hypothesis-whose claim that rehabilitative justice leads to better reintegration and lower recidivism than retributive justice has been proved through studying empirical evidence, case studies, and contrasting legal systems. For all the times that the rehabilitative model has been attacked and has many times given undesired effects, such would can show certain advantages in dealing directly with the root cause of

juvenile delinquency because it promises long-term gains, not just for the juvenile, but also for society. By contrast, the retributive model is focused on immediate deterrence and public satisfaction, contributing little towards preventing recidivism and usually leading to adverse psychological effects on the juvenile offenders.

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Summary of Major Findings

- Efficacy in Redirecting Prospects of Recidivism: Whatever could be termed by rehabilitative efforts, countries, such as Norway, utilizing an example such as the U.S. Missouri Model, observe very low recidivism rates among juvenile delinquents. Conversely, retribution, particularly when juvenile offenders are tried as adults or subjected to long-term imprisonment, is associated with high reoffending rates.
- 2. **Psychological Effects**: Approaches that rehabilitate have facilitated better psychological outcomes for juvenile offenders. Such treatment programs involving therapy, education, and community integration reduce the assumption of stigmatization associated with crime and create an atmosphere in which the offender feels healthy selfesteem. On the contrary, punishment-oriented models, particularly those that include trials and imprisonment as an adult model, have usually been linked to severe traumatic damages and entitlement to criminal identities.
- 3. Popular Perception Compared to Reality: Although generally on the surface of things, people seem fond of punitive sentences, especially in extremely public cases, such outcomes are very counterproductive. Retribution tends to work poorly with juvenile crime deterrence, so the layperson's conception of deserving punishment may not perfectly coincide with that of long-term crime reduction and rehabilitating offenders.
- 4. **Balancing Offenders and Victims' Rights**: By pursuing restorative justice practices, this model provides pronounced potential for balance between victim rights and offender needs. In contrast to retribution, which only cares about punishment, the rehabilitative model sees healing and restitution happen through dialogue between the victim and offender, often neglecting the rehabilitative needs of the offender and the long-term impact on both parties.

Call for a Hybrid or Balanced Model

Indeed, according to the findings of the current study, it is evident that no model-the rehabilitative or the retributive-really stands up alone. A hybrid approach is the optimal solution that carries the best of both worlds. It may be a potentially more effective and humane solution

A **balanced model** would:

• Overlapping restorative justice with rehabilitative services to meet the requirements of the juvenile as well as the victim.

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- Focus on preventive measures and early intervention as to be able to counteract the actual root causes of delinquency as include poverty, abuse, and ignorance.
- Ensure that punishment is equal in severity to the offense committed while allowing some possibility of rehabilitation and reintegration with the mainstream society.
- Make certain that the juvenile's rights are well respected, while bringing some sense of justice to the injured victim and society as well.

The view of a fair rehabilitation scheme being placed above punishment measures is upheld by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Beijing Rules in favourable circumstances for juvenile offenders. In line with this, international conventions support that rehabilitation stands foremost in similar circumstances, while punishment comes next in juvenile situations, as in the case of the UNCRC and the Beijing Rules. Those international conventions United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Beijing Rules-allow for a balance, one giving preference to rehabilitation rather than punishment, especially in juvenile cases.

❖ Final Thoughts

The treatment of unlawful actions in juvenile cases should also be focused on enhancing the young offender's reform into a responsible member of society. If administered effectively, a reformative approach will assist in disrupting recidivism, thereby creating a safe environment. It is plausible that a correct blend of the punishment of punishment and the reward of rehabilitation-would give all concerned their rights while suggesting that if rehabilitative measures don't work, punishments could be considered.

9. SUGGESTIONS / POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It has important recommendations and policy measures to increase the effectiveness of juvenile justice systems. By these recommendations, rehabilitation can be ensured while acting to the juvenile offenders in ways that support resocialization and the prevention of recidivism. These recommendations also aim at a more balanced and fair judicial process for juveniles.

1. Strengthening Rehabilitation Infrastructure

Regarding the juvenile justice administration, rehabilitation infrastructure is one of its
most urgent needs. Establish a clear juvenile detention legal-evaluative process that
would formulate a person-centred rehabilitation plan for each juvenile offender in the
justice system.

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- Rehabilitate Juvenile Offenders in Specialized Rehabilitation Centres: The government will spend much more on juvenile rehabilitation centres to enable full and appropriate educational facilities, vocational training courses, mental health services, and recreational activities. The centres should aim at rehabilitation rather than punishment and creating a therapeutic environment for personal growth and learning.
- Training for Juvenile Justice Professionals: A productive investment is to be directed towards the training of juvenile justice professionals, such as judges, probation officers, counsellors, and law enforcement. These professionals should be well-trained in child development as well as trauma-informed care so that they can best serve the needs of juvenile offenders.
- Support Services Available to the Youth after Intensive Rehabilitation- Continuing support services should be provided after discharge to rehabilitated juveniles, such as mentoring, family counselling, educational assistance, and mental health services to attain full reintegration into society.

2. Clearer Criteria for Trying Juveniles as Adults

Trialing minors as adults is probably one of the most controversial issues in juvenile justice systems, especially in serious offenses. While people argue that some crimes may be deserving of being charged as adults, the juvenile justice system should prove that this occurs with specific and consistent criteria established to prevent adultification of juveniles.

- Revised Criteria and Guidelines: There should be established in all jurisdictions clear criteria and guidelines upon which a juvenile may be tried as an adult. These should include elements like age, maturity, mental health, very nature of the offense in consideration of the precedent case. A juvenile should only be tried as an adult when there is other necessity and a full assessment by mental health professionals.
- Focus on Rehabilitation: The main aim would be rehabilitation, even when tried as adult juveniles. Specific programs related to education, mental health care, and the

development of skills would be available in adult facilities for juveniles to minimize their tendency to reoffend.

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Preventing Disproportionate Sentencing: Sentences meted out to juveniles tried as
adults must measure up to the actual level of the juvenile's involvement in the crime,
while bearing in mind how developed the young person is and the space for
rehabilitation. Sentence guidelines must abstain from life sentences or excessively
punitive measures against juveniles.

3. Mandatory Counselling, Education, and Vocational Training

In case of rehabilitation, any juvenile justice system would have education, counselling, and vocational training high on its agenda because these are the very means by which juveniles can be given an understanding of the emotional tools and skills that make their successful reintegration possible.

- Mandatory Counselling: Every juvenile who enters the justice system must receive
 mandatory counselling for potential problems like trauma, substance abuse, or mental
 illness. Counselling will thus be designed based on the individual needs of each juvenile
 so that they would be able to have their own experience.
- Educational Programmes: Educational facilities must provide juveniles access to good education while vice versa, while in detention and rehabilitation, the education should generalise applicable life skills as well in preparation to be reintegrated into society. It is usually significant in literacy, numeracy, and career-oriented skills.
- Vocational Training: Offering such vocational skills will include carpentry, welding, computing, or even cookery, which have been very useful since the juvenile leaves, it could be handy in getting stable employment. The vocational training programs have been designed from the demand in the market so that they would provide a recognised certificate to enhance the chances of obtaining jobs by the juvenile upon their release.

4. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Centres

Having an integrated juvenile justice system, which is holistic, will be achievable through collaboration among state agencies, NGOs, and community centres. Those bodies can provide extra assistance and services that are not readily available within the formal justice framework.

• NGO collaborations - Governments shall work along with the NGOs dealing with the welfare of children, mental health, restorative justice, and social reintegration. These

organizations can assist in intervening with at-risk juveniles and provide rehabilitative

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programming, which will complement the formal justice system. Refer to the services that can provide support outside of the formal justice system: family therapy, peer

support groups, and community-based restorative justice practices.

• Lately, most of the focus has been given to community programs. Juvenile

rehabilitation is focused on providing an atmosphere that is both nearby and low in

security in which to reintegrate. Such programs may include mentoring, educational

support, and life skills development, constructed with the help of local communities to

instill in the juveniles a sense of belongingness and responsibility to their

neighbourhoods.

• Restorative Justice Practices: Community-based restorative justice programs enable the

juveniles to help repair the injury done to the community by talking about it with the

direct victims, fellow community members, and offenders. They are held accountable

while also promoting an awareness of empathy to lessen the chances of reoffending by

involving offenders in conversations with the victim and community members.

Conclusion

With overwhelming evidence in favour of rehabilitation rather than punishment for juvenile

offenders, we need to move from tradition to a more accepted, scientific view. The policy

recommendations noted above, strengthening the rehabilitation infrastructure, establishing

clearer criteria for trying juveniles as adults, making counselling, education, and vocational

training mandatory, and collaboratively working with NGOs and community centres, create a

vastly improved system of care for juvenile offenders with rights while addressing crime and

successful reintegration into society.

With the implementation of these recommendations, juvenile justice systems can then promote

environments wherein young offenders are given opportunities for reform, reducing

recidivism, and eventually benefiting both the offenders and society at large.

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