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RECONCEPTUALIZING JUVENILE REHABILITATION
UNDER THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015 THROUGH THE
LENS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The main law in India about youth in conflict with the law is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.¹ The intent of the Act is to rehabilitate and reintegrate the youth and provide child-focused justice; however, there is no clearly defined developmental framework that articulates how to measure the different types of rehabilitation and the scope of rehabilitative efforts outlined in the Act. Additionally, while the Act is primarily focused on reform, it lacks a comprehensive theory regarding the nature of rehabilitation.² This paper supports the notion that the rehabilitation of youth as it is defined in the Act relies on fractured concepts and has very little in the way of being clearly defined within the documents associated with juvenile justice in India. The paper lends itself to a new understanding of the rehabilitation of youth within the Indian juvenile justice system by applying concepts from Positive Youth Development (PYD), a theoretical framework based on the strengths of youth through competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring.³ It uses both doctrinal and comparative methods to analyse whether or not the provisions of the Act are aligned with the PYD. There are many similarities and several key differences between the two; therefore, bringing together these two constructs will increase clarity with regard to rehabilitation, improve implementation, and align India's juvenile justice system with international standards for child rights and developmental justice.

1. Introduction

The concept of Juvenile justice is often thought of as separate from the rest of the legal system, as it seeks to balance holding children accountable for their actions while also recognizing the fact that children are still developing emotionally, cognitively, and socially.⁴ Whereas adult offenders face punishment as a consequence of their behaviour, juvenile justice recognizes that children are capable of change and offers a different approach to resolving problems than will be attempted at the adult level.

¹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015).

² Ved Kumari, The Juvenile Justice Act 2015—Critical Understanding, 58 J. Indian L. Inst. 83 (2016).

³ W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs (Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008); Positive Development: Realizing the Potential of Youth, 591 Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci. 202 (2004).

⁴ Laura S. Abrams, Juvenile Justice at a Crossroads: Science, Evidence, and Twenty-First Century Reform, 87 Soc. Serv. Rev. 725 (2013).



India has developed a law that embodies these notions through the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act). The JJ Act creates a set of rules that are designed to help children become productive members of society by providing opportunities for rehabilitation and reinforcing the best interests of the child.⁵ To accomplish this goal, the JJ Act includes mechanisms such as individual care plans, counselling services, vocational training, and aftercare services, which reflect an overall shift towards a welfare-oriented/reform-oriented type of framework.⁶

While the JJ Act does offer various mechanisms for rehabilitating juveniles, there is no clear definition as to what these mechanisms should achieve in terms of rehabilitation and no consistent standard for determining if rehabilitation has been successful.⁷ Due to this lack of a defined vision of rehabilitation under the JJ Act, implementation will vary widely among different types of institutions and jurisdictions.

The research within youth justice has begun to focus as much on developmental or strengths-based models of sentencing, for example, through Positive Youth Development or PYD models, as it does on research-based (deficit-based) models in which risks/deviance are emphasized.⁸

In the past, due to the historical application of the JJ Act into both juvenile and adult systems of justice, rehabilitation has been conceptualized as less meaningful than punishment or retribution. With this understanding, what follows is a doctrinal and comparative analysis of how rehabilitation is conceptualized under the JJ Act, what PYD's theoretical foundations can provide, and how the application of PYD principles could better support rehabilitation efforts within India's juvenile justice system.

2. The Positive Youth Development Framework

Positive Youth Development is an emerging multidisciplinary framework that presents an alternative to traditional juvenile justice models. Contemporary models have concentrated on finding risk factors, predicting delinquent behavior, and correcting juveniles' behavior through behavioral control methods. In contrast to these conventional models, the positive youth development model is a strengths-based model that focuses on the inherent potential of young people and their ability to develop positively.⁹

⁵ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015).

⁶ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016, Gazette of India (2016).

⁷ Ved Kumari, The Juvenile Justice Act 2015—Critical Understanding, 58 J. Indian L. Inst. 83 (2016); S. Selvi Nithya & P. B. Shankar Narayan, Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 – A Critical Analysis, 5 Shanlax Int'l J. Arts, Sci. & Human. 71 (2018) (Special Issue 7).

⁸ W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs (Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008); Positive Development: Realizing the Potential of Youth, 591 Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci. 202 (2004).

⁹ W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs (Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008).



The framework's theoretical basis draws on three theoretical concepts: developmental psychology, ecological systems theory, and the strengths perspective in social work. According to research in developmental psychology, the developmental stages of adolescence are marked by significant neural development in such areas as the development of impulse control, judgment, and emotional regulation.¹⁰ Therefore, results from developmental psychology provide evidence for the fact that juvenile delinquency is often the result of developmental processes rather than long-standing criminal intent.

Ecological systems theory builds on the tenets of developmental psychology by focusing on how environmental conditions impact and are impacted by the individual's behaviour, including family, school, peer group, and community.¹¹ Therefore, juvenile delinquency is viewed as the result of dynamic interaction between individual behavioural characteristics and contextual influences, rather than the result of one or the other's failure. The principles established in PYD advocate for intervention strategies to promote both the individual and the environmental context in which they develop.¹²

A main point of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework is the "Five Cs" model: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Competence is the development of skills needed to perform successfully in society, including academic, social, and vocational skills.¹³ Confidence refers to self-esteem and self-efficacy, both of which are critical to motivation and personal development. Connection refers to positive relationships with family and friends as well as connection to the community. Character is the process of moral development and building responsibility. Lastly, caring is the development of empathy and concern for others, leading to prosocial behaviour.

Some researchers believe that the existence of all five of these components produces a sixth component, contribution, where people are engaged in society and making positive contributions through active participation.¹⁴ The ultimate goal of PYD is to create socially integrated citizens through profitability, rather than just developing citizens who are avoiding delinquency.

Additionally, PYD has a preventative focus. PYD does not just correct delinquency by addressing the problem after an offence has occurred; PYD promotes early intervention, skill-building, and safe environments to prevent delinquency from occurring.¹⁵ Additionally, the concept of PYD is in line with contemporary perspectives on juvenile justice, which view

¹⁰ Snehi Gupta & Rajesh Sagar, Juvenile Justice System, Juvenile Mental Health, and the Role of MHPs:

Challenges and Opportunities, 42 Indian J. Psychol. Med. 304 (2020).

¹¹ John Muncie, *Youth and Crime* (4th ed. Sage Publ'ns 2015).

¹² Dennis Saleebey, *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice: Extensions and Cautions*, 41 Soc. Work 296 (1996)

¹³ *Positive Development: Realizing the Potential of Youth*, 591 Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci. 202 (2004).

¹⁴ W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, *Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs* (Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008).

¹⁵ Daniel P. Mears, Justin T. Pickett & Christina Mancini, *Support for Balanced Juvenile Justice: Assessing Views About Youth, Rehabilitation, and Punishment*, 31 J. Quantitative Criminology 459 (2015).



behaviour change as requiring an ongoing developmental approach rather than a short-term punitive approach.

PYD has developed a systematic, multi-dimensional approach to understanding how youth rehabilitate through demonstrated goal, and accountability for measurable results, unlike many previous mental health models based entirely upon legal definitions of delinquent children.

The main benefit of the (PYD) approach, is that it departs from historical deficit-oriented models; often times, juvenile justice practices are based predominately upon juvenile delinquency esteem values and the application of risk factors as predictive measuring instruments; through imposition of control based intervention objects.¹⁶ In general, when implementing control based intervention strategies to attempt to immediately minimize juvenile delinquency rates, and these methods have shown promise to do so under the current paradigm; they are not effective in meeting the overall developmental needs of children. Conversely, in the PYD perspective, juvenile delinquents are viewed as developing resources to be utilized rather than problems to be controlled. This conceptual framework significantly alters the manner in which public policy, practices, and the treatment of juvenile offenders is developed through the emphasis of engagement, empowerment, participation, and long-term success of developing adolescent youth.¹⁷

In addition to the above, the (PYD) approach emphasizes that behavioural change cannot be generated by discrete, isolated interventions. Rather, sustainable behaviour change requires a continuum of ongoing interaction through several domains of engagement with youth, including; education, family relationships, peer relationship networks, and community involvement. As such, the (PYD) holistic, multi-domain perspective on working with youth establishes it as distinct from traditional correctional approaches and provides an important perspective for contemporary juvenile justice systems in their pursuit of achieving sustained and quality outcomes for adolescents.

3. Rehabilitative Framework under the JJ Act, 2015

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 provides a comprehensive legislative framework for addressing the requirements of children who have come into conflict with the law. Emphasis is placed on rehabilitation, reintegration, and child protection within the context of a shift away from punitive measures to welfare-oriented justice.¹⁸

A key aspect of the Act is an emphasis on individualized care. The provision for social

investigation reports and individual care plans demonstrates a willingness to recognize that rehabilitation is more effective when tailored to the individual circumstances of each child. In addition, there are several rehabilitative measures, including and not limited to, counseling,

¹⁶ Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (Oxford Univ. Press 1999).

¹⁷ Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (Oxford Univ. Press 1999).

¹⁸ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015).



educational assistance, vocational training, and aftercare services designed to facilitate the reintegration of children into society.¹⁹

Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees, and the child care institutions that fall under their auspices are considered to be essential mechanisms for the implementation of these provisions.²⁰ As such, these bodies are expected to employ child-friendly processes and to undertake interventions that advance the best interests of the child.

Despite these progressive components, however, the rehabilitative provision of the Act has its limitations. First, the statute does not provide an explicit definition of rehabilitation.²¹ While it provides for various rehabilitative interventions, it also fails to explain what the developmental objectives of the various rehabilitative interventions will be.

The uncertainty surrounding the juvenile justice system creates problems for creating coherent programs and assessing outcomes.

The implementation of rehabilitative measures is often completed in an isolated manner.²² Educational, psychological, and social interventions, for instance, are typically conducted without being incorporated into any kind of cohesive framework. Consequently, rehabilitation is diminished, and the possibility of making long-term changes in behaviour is reduced.

There are also numerous significant challenges to providing infrastructure and capacity such as overcrowded facilities, inadequate numbers of trained staff, and the lack of standardized programs between states.²³ These challenges limit the successful implementation of rehabilitation and lessen the overall objectives of the Juvenile Justice Act.

Additionally, the introduction of provisions to permit certain juveniles to be prosecuted as adults creates concerns about the consistency of the rehabilitative philosophy of the Act.²⁴ Critics assert that these provisions conflict with developmental principles and ultimately increase the likelihood of recidivism.

Overall, the JJ Act demonstrates a commitment to rehabilitating juvenile offenders but has conceptual and practical limitations that require a more systemic and developmentally informed approach. Another significant limitation of the juvenile justice system is the reliance

¹⁹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016, Gazette of India (2016)

²⁰ D. C. Nanjunda & C. B. Naveen Chandra, Juvenile Justice Act, 2015: A Multi Centric Study on Functioning of Juvenile Justice Board and Child Welfare Committees in Indian Childcare Institutions and Measures to Improve (research study, Univ. of Mysore).

²¹ Ved Kumari, The Juvenile Justice Act 2015—Critical Understanding, 58 J. Indian L. Inst. 83 (2016).

²² S. Selvi Nithya & P. B. Shankar Narayan, Gaps and Challenges in Implementing Juvenile Justice (Care and

Protection of Children) Act 2015 – A Critical Analysis, 5 Shanlax Int'l J. Arts, Sci. & Human. 71 (2018) (Special Issue 7).

²³ Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India, The Report of the Committee for Analysing Data of Mapping and Review Exercise of Child Care Institutions Under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Other Homes, Vol. I (2018).

²⁴ B. B. Pande, “Bad” Juveniles and the “Worst” Juvenile Justice Law? The Second Challenge to Juvenile Justice Law in Darga Ram v. State of Rajasthan, 57 J. Indian L. Inst. 27 (2015).



on broad and generalised formulations of rehabilitation, which lack a defined qualitative aspect to developmental change.

While individual care plans must be developed under the Act, the absence of standard benchmarks to allow for actual assessment of progress and the lack of measurable indicators creates significant challenges in the monitoring and evaluation of progress and consistently results in varying degrees of outcomes among different institutions.²⁵

Also, there remains a degree to which the institutional structure of juvenile justice in India has a custodial orientation despite the Act's objective being rehabilitation. Many institutions provide very little developmental programming due to functioning as detention facilities. The lack of integration of educational, psychological, and social interventions provides additional barriers to effective rehabilitation.

These and other problems point to a need for a conceptual framework which will define rehabilitation and will provide guidance on the implementation of rehabilitation programs. An example of such a framework is the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework. Example of the PYD is the incorporation of multiple dimensions of development into a structured, outcome-oriented model.

4. Doctrinal Comparison: JJ Act and PYD

A thorough comparison between both the PYD and JJ Act shows that there are many similarities and differences between the two frameworks when it comes to how they view rehabilitation for juveniles.

At a normative level, PYD and the JJ Act both have a strong focus on rehabilitation, reintegration into society and addressing developmental needs of juveniles. Legal provisions in the JJ Act that deal with the areas of education, counselling and aftercare all correspond to different aspects of the PYD framework relating to competence and confidence.²⁶ Restoration of family relationships and community-based intervention also aligns with the connection principle of PYD.

Most of these similarities are implicit within the statutory framework of each of these two frameworks. The JJ Act lacks an articulated, comprehensive rehabilitative model of juvenile justice and therefore this leads to a lack of coherence in the implementation of the Act and ultimately inhibits the capacity to measure the effectiveness of the different types of interventions.²⁷

²⁵ Preeti Varma & Amit Singh, An Analytical Approach to Juvenile Justice and Rehabilitation Measures Under the Juvenile Justice Act in India, 4 Int'l J. Civ. L. & Legal Rsch. 61 (2024).

²⁶ W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs (Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008); Preeti Varma & Amit Singh, An Analytical Approach to Juvenile Justice and Rehabilitation Measures Under the Juvenile Justice Act in India, 4 Int'l J. Civ. L. & Legal Rsch. 61 (2024).

²⁷ Ved Kumari, The Juvenile Justice Act 2015—Critical Understanding, 58 J. Indian L. Inst. 83 (2016).



The other major differentiating factor between the two frameworks lies in their foundational orientation. The PYD framework is a strength-based model with a focus on the potential and interests of young people, while juvenile justice systems predominantly continue to operate from a risk-based perspective focusing primarily on controlling and supervising those in the juvenile justice system.²⁸ This fundamental divergence has serious implications for how practices associated with each framework are implemented and operated; the strength-based approach is inherently more likely to create opportunities for young people to become involved with and ultimately change their behaviours over time.

The differences between PYD and the JJ Act also extend to how each evaluates success. PYD measures success through concrete indicators such as the development of specific skills, self-esteem, and social integration.²⁹ By using these indicators, programs can be systematically evaluated for their effectiveness. On the other hand, there are no clearly defined markers for measuring success under the JJ Act. This ambiguity leads to little accountability and inconsistency in how the JJ Act's programs/initiatives are implemented or executed.

The fact that PYD uses an ecological systems approach also highlights the need for used intervention strategies across the family, school, and community environments to improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation.³⁰ Although an ecological systems perspective is acknowledged in the JJ Act, the way in which it has been implemented continues to focus solely on institutional rehabilitation, thereby limiting the effectiveness of rehabilitation.

From a broader international perspective, PYD is consistent with many international standards (e.g., United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or the Beijing Rules) that emphasize rehabilitation, reintegration and the minimal use of detention.³¹ Therefore, by integrating PYD into the JJ Act, India would be better able to comply with international standards and to support the development of a stronger normative framework for juvenile justice in India.

In conclusion, while the JJ Act and PYD have a shared goal, PYD are effective because it is a structured, comprehensive approach that addresses both the conceptual and practical limitations of the JJ Act in addressing the youth within it. Another key difference between these frameworks is their respective timeframes (i.e. how long each framework is intended to address youth).

The Juvenile Justice Act primarily addresses immediate intervention after someone has committed an act of delinquency, whereas Positive Youth Development takes a long-term view by focusing on continued growth and development over time. This difference is very important because although some short-term interventions can create compliance, they will not provide

- ²⁸ Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (Oxford Univ. Press 1999); Dennis Saleebey, *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice: Extensions and Cautions*, 41 *Soc. Work* 296 (1996). ²⁹ Daniel P. Mears, Justin T. Pickett & Christina Mancini, *Support for Balanced Juvenile Justice: Assessing Views About Youth, Rehabilitation, and Punishment*, 31 *J. Quantitative Criminology* 459 (2015).
- ³⁰ John Muncie, *Youth and Crime* (4th ed. Sage Publ'ns 2015).
- ³¹ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3; *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules)*, G.A. Res. 40/33, U.N. Doc. A/RES/40/33 (Nov. 29, 1985).



the necessary means to achieve true changes in behaviour. By placing emphasis on continuance, follow up, and long-term involvement, Positive Youth Development offers the most accurate way to assist with rehabilitative success, and to understand that change occurs gradually and continuously.

5. Reconceptualizing Rehabilitation through PYD

Reconceptualising juvenile rehabilitation based on a PYD perspective (which stands for positive youth development) implies that we need to shift from an approach that is focused primarily on programme-based interventions to one that is based on a structured developmental framework.³²

The first step to achieving this is to redefine rehabilitation in terms of developmental outcomes that are consistent with the Five Cs. By doing this, we will create clarity with respect to what rehabilitation means and provide a framework for evaluating progress systematically. Secondly, we will need to reorient traditional institutional practices towards strength-based approaches thereby allowing juvenile justice institutions to serve as environments for learning, growth, and skill development, rather than purely as places of detention.³³ Thirdly, there must be a greater emphasis on community-based interventions. By enhancing family relationships, educational opportunities, and community engagement, we will be creating an environment conducive to long-lasting reintegration.³⁴ Fourth, we need to develop the capacity through training for judges, social workers, and institutional staff in order to effectively implement PYD principles and developmental psychology into their work.³⁵ Finally, we will need to develop mechanisms for monitoring and assessing rehabilitation outcomes, both at the individual and aggregate levels. The development of measurable indicators such as educational attainment, emotional well-being, and social integration will allow for systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts.³⁶ Such reforms have the potential to transform the juvenile justice system from a reactive, control-oriented system to one that is proactive and developmentally focused. In addition, the introduction of PYD principles into the juvenile justice system will necessitate a redefinition of success within that system.

Measures as recidivism rates can be used to evaluate how well someone has done in their recovery, or additional measures may include those listed (degree/high school diploma, psychosocial wellness, social support systems) so that there is a broader measure of the success

³² W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs

(Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008)

³³ Dennis Saleebey, The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice: Extensions and Cautions, 41 Soc. Work 296 (1996).

³⁴ Daniel P. Mears, Justin T. Pickett & Christina Mancini, Support for Balanced Juvenile Justice: Assessing Views About Youth, Rehabilitation, and Punishment, 31 J. Quantitative Criminology 459 (2015).

³⁵ Michael P. Dempsey, Wendi M. Davis, Peter Forbes, Cathleen Barclay Penkoff, Simon Gonsoulin & Phil W. Harris, Juvenile Justice Administrator Perspectives, 46 Behav. Disorders 187 (2021).

³⁶ Christiana Nielsen-Pheiffer, Improving Individualized Education Programs in the Juvenile Justice Setting, 77 J. Correctional Educ. 2 (2026).



of the recovery; and ultimately, this ensures that the designed intervention(s) are consistent with long-term development goals.

6. International and Comparative Perspectives on Developmental Juvenile Justice

The implementation of Positive Youth Development developmental frameworks in juvenile justice systems operates as a worldwide movement which now establishes child-centered rehabilitation methods as the standard in child protection practices. Comparative analysis of international practices provides valuable insight into how structured developmental models can enhance the effectiveness of juvenile justice systems. The United States juvenile justice system has undergone two main transformations between its two main systems of rehabilitation and punishment. The early juvenile courts established their system based on the concept of *parens patriae* which mandated that judges should provide tailored solutions for juvenile offenders who required rehabilitation through their court system. The juvenile justice system adopted stricter punishments during times when public anxiety about juvenile crime reached its highest level.³⁷ Recent decades have seen a resurgence of interest towards developmental science alongside evidence-based methods which have led to greater implementation of community-based solutions and mentoring programs and restorative justice frameworks. The reforms operate as an implicit endorsement of PYD principles which main focus lies on developing competencies and establishing social bonds and supporting long-term social reintegration. The United Kingdom implemented a formalized system to assist juvenile rehabilitation through its creation of youth offending teams which combine legal and psychological and social service components.³⁸

The multidisciplinary teams use their specialized knowledge to create early intervention programs which involve families and use community-based rehabilitation methods to treat environmental and personal factors that affect behavior. The models show how ecological and developmental principles work in real life because they show how different types of interventions should work together. The international legal frameworks which compose international legal standards make developmental approaches to juvenile justice more essential to understanding juvenile justice systems. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasizes that children in conflict with law must be treated in a manner that promotes their dignity, worth, and reintegration into society.³⁹ The Beijing Rules and Havana Rules similarly stress the importance of rehabilitation, diversion, and minimal use of

³⁷ Zishan Khan, Monika Rastogi & Mohini Taneja, Legislative Framework—The Evolution of Juvenile Justice in the United States: Assessing the Impact of Legislative Changes on Juvenile Delinquency, Rehabilitation, and Human Rights, 7 Int'l J. Legal Sci. & Innovation 333 (2025)

³⁸ Preeti Varma & Amit Singh, Juvenile Justice Act: A Comparative Study of Juvenile Justice Act India, U.K. and U.S.A.—Protection of Children Through Juvenile Justice Act 2015 Analysis, 4 Int'l J. Crim., Common & Statutory L. 50 (2024).

³⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.



detention.⁴⁰ The instruments establish a requirement that juvenile justice systems must focus on developmental outcomes according to the established guidelines of the instruments. The Positive Youth Development framework requires strength-based assessment practices which create supportive environments for youth to achieve social integration according to international standards. The system provides a structured implementation method to achieve developmental outcomes through its method of measuring developmental outcomes. The Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 contains international standards through its multiple principles but its implementation suffers because India lacks a defined developmental framework.⁴¹ The comparative analysis demonstrates that PYD principles lead to better understanding and practical results when organizations implement them through statutory systems and internal procedures. The Indian juvenile justice system needs multidisciplinary development to create a rehabilitative system which achieves its goals through structured methods.

7. Conclusion

The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 represents a significant step toward a rehabilitative and child-centric approach to juvenile justice in India.⁴² The law needs a proper developmental framework to work effectively according to its requirements.

The Positive Youth Development framework offers a comprehensive alternative that emphasizes strengths, developmental outcomes, and long-term social integration. The integration of PYD principles into existing statutory and institutional frameworks will help Indian juvenile justice system to achieve better operational consistency and international standard compliance.⁴³ The application of PYD rehabilitation principles will help establish a new rehabilitation system that enables juvenile justice to handle delinquent behaviour while supporting complete development and social reintegration of young offenders.

⁴⁰ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules), G.A. Res. 40/33, U.N. Doc. A/RES/40/33 (Nov. 29, 1985); United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules), G.A. Res. 45/113, U.N. Doc. A/RES/45/113 (Dec. 14, 1990).

⁴¹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015).

⁴² Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016, India Code (2015).

⁴³ W. H. Barton & J. A. Butts, Building on Strength: Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Programs (Chapin Hall Center for Children at the Univ. of Chicago 2008); Positive Development: Realizing the Potential of Youth, 591 *Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci.* 202 (2004).