# A study on the mechanism of the relationship between economic development and juvenile crime rates

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**Abstract:** The connection between economic development and juvenile crime rates has always been a topic of interest for economists. The author attempts to dissect this issue from both theoretical analysis and empirical data perspectives. In terms of theoretical research, through dialectical analysis of the relationship between economic development and crime rates, the paper reveals the positive and negative impact mechanisms of economic development on juvenile crime rates. Moreover, considering the characteristics of the juvenile group, we also conduct optimization research on economic measures to prevent juvenile delinquency. In the empirical research section, combining data from the annual bulletins and statistical yearbooks of the Supreme People's Court, the relationship between economic development and juvenile crime rates is tested. It is found that from 2002 to 2015, the juvenile crime rate in China increased with the increase in per capita GDP. However, after considering the issue of wealth disparity, the above conclusion is completely reversed. The study indicates that under the condition of unchanged wealth disparity, economic growth has an inhibitory effect on juvenile crime.

**Keywords:** Economic Development, Juvenile Crime Rate, Correlation Mechanism, Wealth Disparity

## 1. Introduction

The study on the association between economic development levels and juvenile delinquency has always been a hot topic in academia. Historically, economy and crime are like "twin sisters"; with the development of productive forces, the emergence of private ownership and the state machinery to protect it, crime was officially "born." From the perspective of individual juvenile offenders, their personal circumstances or family economic conditions are significant inducements for their illegal and criminal behavior, a view shared by most scholars. However, when re-examining this issue from a macro perspective, we find that the above conclusion is not so straightforward. Empirical studies abroad show that there is no uniformity between economic development and the level of juvenile crime rates across countries. For example, in the United States and Brazil, economic growth is positively related to juvenile crime rates, while in Japan and Singapore, it is inversely related. These contradictory pieces of evidence indicate that crime is an extremely complex social issue, prompting us to rethink the relationship between economic development and juvenile delinquency and to delve into the mechanisms of how economic development affects juvenile crime.

## 2. Economic development and crime: a dialectical proposition

In regard to the relationship between crime rates and economic development, numerous scholars have presented data analysis results. In his book "Crime and Modernization," Louise Shelley conducted a study of the development process of the world's major industrialized countries over the past 200 years and found that as the economies of these countries grew during their modernization, crime rates also increased. Shelley also researched the main developing countries in the world today (excluding China) and discovered that many developing countries are facing the problem of rapidly increasing crime rates on their path to modernization, similar to what industrialized countries encountered in the past. Therefore, looking at the economic development history of countries around the world, Shelley believes that most countries have experienced a synchronous increase in crime rates and economic development. Of course, Shelley's research also distinguishes between violent crimes and property crimes; these two different types of crimes do not

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synchronize with the level of economic development. Overall, violent crimes tend to decrease with economic development, while property crimes tend to increase.

As we mentioned in the introduction, there are also contrary conclusions in studies revealing the relationship between economic development and crime rates. Italian criminologist Raffaele Garofalo, after comparing crime activities and social development changes in France from 1826 to 1878, concluded that during the period of rapid economic development in France, crime did not increase but actually decreased. Therefore, he believed that in economically backward areas, there is a high number of crimes, while in economically developed areas, the number of crimes decreases. Eric D. Gould, Bruce A. Weinberg, and David B. Mustard, in their 2006 paper on crime rates and the labor market, found through an analysis of crime rates and wage levels in the United States from 1979 to 1997 that crime rates in the U.S. during that period were inversely related to wage levels. In other words, Eric and his colleagues believe that an increase in the level of economic development helps to reduce crime rates. Some studies also suggest that there is not a simple linear correlation between economic development and crime rates. For example, Wu Shiwei, based on empirical tests using time series data from China from 1986 to 2012, found that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between the criminal crime rate and economic growth in both the short and long term, and the greater the urban-rural income gap, the higher the level of social criminal crime rates. In addition, a few scholars believe that there is no relationship between economic development and crime rates, and any view that links the two lacks theoretical support, and actual data cannot be tested.

In fact, in the vast majority of literature, the connection between economic conditions and crime issues is still quite close. The reason for the contradictory final conclusions, apart from the reasons of statistical caliber and statistical techniques, is the different control variables such as statistical periods and national conditions, which lead to different results. These differences also remind us that as an extremely complex crime issue, any theory that tries to explain crime with a single factor is questionable, and a comprehensive evaluation of multiple factors is closer to the essence of the crime issue. Therefore, this article first analyzes the different impacts of economic development on juvenile delinquency from a dialectical perspective and then explores the path mechanisms of these impacts.

### 2.1. Economic pathways inducing juvenile delinquency

Scholars have long recognized the uniqueness of the adolescent stage. Psychologist Hall believed that adolescence is the most special stage in human development, with drastic physical changes leading to turbulent psychological changes and individuals being filled with intense but unstable emotions. Erickson also believed that individuals would experience an identity crisis during adolescence, and if they cannot get through it smoothly, they would experience self-diffusion. It is precisely because of the uniqueness of adolescence that the crime rate of the group in this stage will show a characteristic of large fluctuations. Taking the growth rate of criminal penalties for minors in China over the past 15 years as an example, the fluctuation range is significantly higher than the overall criminal penalty growth rate during the same period, as shown in Figure 1. The fluctuation range of the growth rate of criminal penalties for minors is roughly from -15% to 20%, with a fluctuation rate close to 35%. It can be seen that the possibility of juveniles committing crimes influenced by the external environment is far greater than that of adults. So, what are the factors that economic development induces in the crime of the juvenile group? According to the literature review, the main points of focus in academia are primarily concentrated on two factors: absolute income (wealth) and wealth disparity (distribution).

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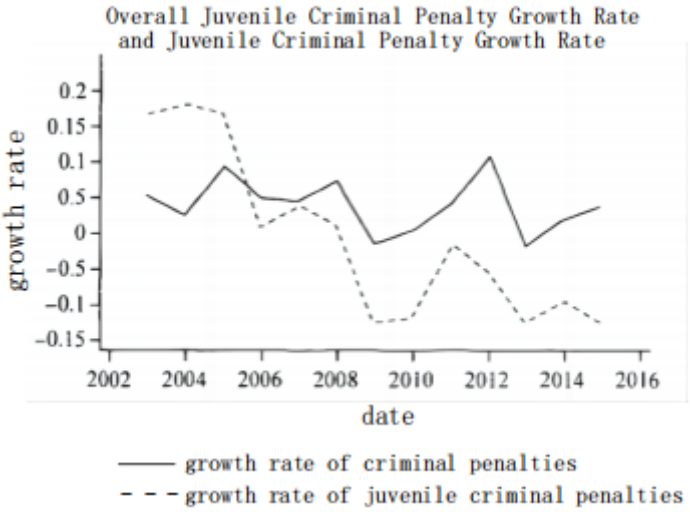
Figure 1: Comparison of Crime Growth Rates between Juveniles and the General Population




From the perspective of absolute income, economic conditions play a fundamental role in meeting people's needs. Adolescents in impoverished environments, when unable to meet their most basic material needs and lacking the ability to improve their economic conditions, are more likely to go astray. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory states: someone who lacks food, self-esteem, and love will first demand food; as long as this need is not met, they will ignore or cover up other needs. Crime resulting from poverty is fundamentally caused by the inability to fulfill their lower-level needs.

The hypothesis that low absolute income induces crime faces challenges when economic development reaches a certain level. At this point, the overall material standard of society has reached a considerable height, and according to this hypothesis, the crime rate across society should tend to decline. However, as we mentioned earlier, a decline in crime rates has not shown a universal trend. Consequently, a viewpoint emerges that social and economic development leads to uneven distribution, which in turn leads to an increase in crime rates. In fact, this viewpoint aligns well with the human society's idea that "it is not the scarcity but the inequality that is feared." According to Zhang Baoyi's survey on the economic living conditions of juvenile delinquents and their impact on crime, the objective economic living conditions of juvenile delinquents may have a limited impact on their crimes, while the decisive factor is the subjective evaluation of their own living standards, which is mainly obtained through comparison with the living conditions of those around them. Foreign-related studies have also revealed this phenomenon. Fajnzylber P, Lederman D, Loayza N, after analyzing data from 39 countries from 1965 to 1995, found that the violent crime rates in these countries were positively correlated with their Gini coefficients. These studies all indicate that the issue of wealth disparity affects the level of crime rates through different manifestations.

Through the above analysis, we find that the inducing impact of the economy on juvenile delinquency cannot be simply explained by the correlation between economic growth rates and juvenile crime rates. In fact, the outcomes of economic development are diverse, and the juvenile crime rate, as the "effect" we are concerned with, is a composite of multiple "causes."

### 2.2. Economic development strategies to inhibit juvenile delinquency

Economic development naturally leads to an increase in per capita wealth, and this increase greatly satisfies people's material desires. As part of society, the youth group also benefits from the increase in social wealth. Tian He Cheng, Wan Guanghua, and Huo Xue ji, through the examination and econometric analysis of historical data on China's economic growth, income disparity, population mobility rate, urbanization level, and changes in crime rates from 1955 to 2007, combined with relevant theories, believe that economic growth can indeed lead to a decrease in crime rates. Data spanning 53 years indicate that in China, regardless of the economic system, economic growth itself leads to a decrease in crime rates.

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In addition to the inhibitory effect on juvenile delinquency brought about by the absolute increase in societal wealth due to economic growth, the inhibitory effect of economic growth on juvenile delinquency can also be transmitted through the labor market. Generally, young people of working age in the youth group often occupy the lower strata of the labor force, and these positions are more significantly affected by the economy. When the economy is on an upward trajectory, these positions provide more job opportunities, thus increasing the employment rate of young people of working age. Work not only brings income to this part of the youth but also makes their lives more fulfilling and regular. Conversely, when the economy is on a downward trajectory, facing a significant reduction in demand for lower-level positions, the employment opportunities for young people of working age also decrease significantly, and the rise in unemployment rates leads to an increase in juvenile crime rates through two pathways. First, the reduction or absence of income leads to an increase in crime rates, which can be explained by the absolute income (wealth) hypothesis effect. Second, these young people of working age no longer have a regular life and have a lot of free time every day. Combined with the specific physiological stage of adolescents, excessive energy leads to a sharp increase in some accidental crimes. It is quite challenging to empirically test the impact of China's economic development on the labor market and then on juvenile crime rates. The main difficulty lies in the gap between the official urban unemployment rate statistics and the actual unemployment rate, with some scholars believing that the currently published urban registered unemployment rate data in China is much higher than the actual level. This study obtained the urban registered unemployment rate in China from the China Statistical Yearbook for the past 15 years, and we found that this data has been around 4.1% over the years, with an unusually narrow fluctuation range. The relationship between this data and the rate of criminal penalties for minors is shown in Figure 2, and the correlation between the two is weak, with a correlation coefficient of only 0.29. We believe this may be due to the distortion of conclusions caused by the quality of statistics.

To address the problem caused by the distortion of urban registered unemployment rate data, some scholars have also verified the association between unemployment rates and crime rates through surveys. According to Cong Mei's survey of criminals in Tianjin prisons, those who were unemployed urban residents before arrest accounted for 10.6% of all criminals, which does not include farmers in the cities who were unemployed. If both are added together, they account for 59.8%. In the follow-up survey of recidivist criminals, those who did not find work after returning to society accounted for 79.3%, those with unstable economic income accounted for 72.4%, and those whose economic difficulties could not be resolved through normal channels accounted for 39.1%. These studies have made up for the distortion between the underestimation of previous unemployment rate data and the correlation with crime rates, revealing the correlation between unemployment and crime rates.

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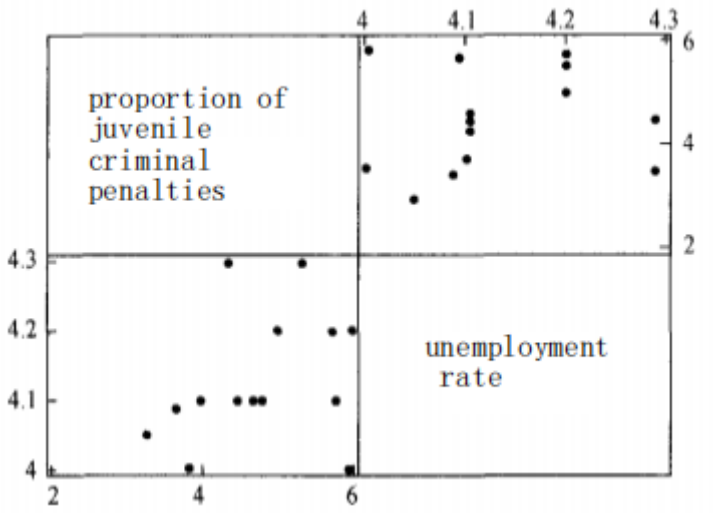
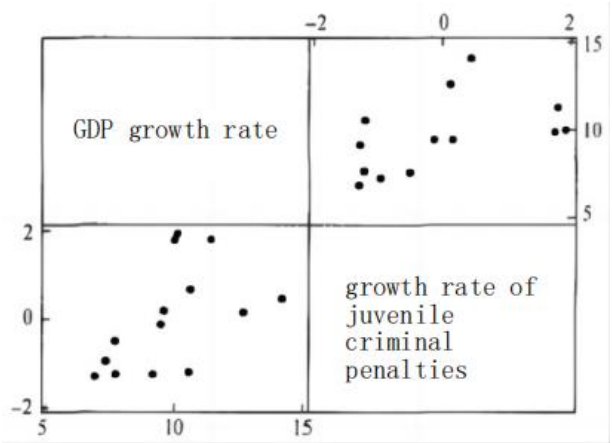
Figure 2: Urban Unemployment Rate and Juvenile Criminal Penalty Rate




**2.3. The mixed effects of economic development on juvenile delinquency**

We have analyzed the positive and negative effects of the economy on juvenile delinquency. From existing literature and the aforementioned analysis, there should be a certain correlation between economic growth and juvenile crime, but it is important to note that this correlation is transmitted through different aspects of economic development. To enhance our intuitive understanding of this issue, we use the GDP growth rate as a proxy variable for economic development and the growth rate of criminal penalties for minors in China over the past 15 years as a proxy variable for the growth rate of juvenile crime. In Figure 3, we plot the correlation between the two. By analyzing the data from the past 15 years, we find that there may be a moderate correlation between economic growth and juvenile crime. For more detailed and comprehensive significance analysis, we will conduct further research in the following sections.

Figure 3: GDP Growth Rate and Juvenile Criminal Penalty Growth Rate




From a historical perspective, the overall trend of economic growth is continuously upward, with per capita wealth, the level of social civilization, the environment of rule of law construction, and the level of education all improving. However, empirical tests on crime rates have not provided a trend line that is consistently upward or downward. Except for some years that include special times, the overall fluctuation of crime rates is not drastic from a macro perspective. Does this mean that there is no connection between economic development and crime rates, or juvenile crime rates? Does economic development have no effect on preventing juvenile delinquency? To answer these questions, we need to extend and interpret the connotation of economic development. As mentioned earlier, economic development is defined as the process of actual welfare growth per capita in a country or region. It is not only an increase and expansion in

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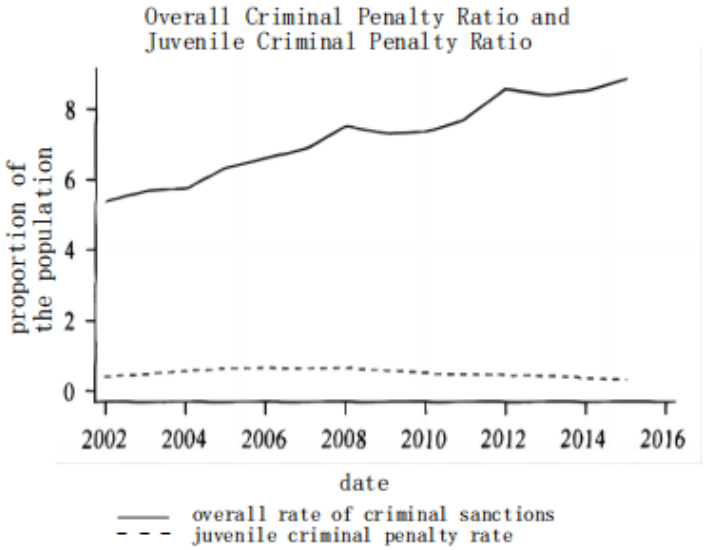
the quantity of wealth and the economic organism but also implies qualitative changes, that is, innovation in economic and social structures, and improvements in the quality of social life and input-output efficiency. Although economic growth is an important indicator of economic development, it must not be simply equated with economic development. In the process of economic development, social structures are also constantly changing, so the impact of economic development on juvenile crime rates is a dynamically changing process. That is, when economic growth reaches a certain stage, social disparities in wealth begin to emerge, leading to an increase in juvenile crime rates. As the economy and social structures develop further, wealth disparities are controlled, and juvenile crime rates will decrease. With further economic development, there is a repetitive trend in juvenile crime rates. Economic development has a similar repetitive effect in many aspects, fundamentally due to the dynamic changes in economic structures causing fluctuations in juvenile crime rates.

## 3. Economic development and juvenile crime correlation analysis

### 3.1. Data sources and processing

To further clarify the pathways through which economic growth affects juvenile delinquency, we extracted the number of annual juvenile judgments and the number of annual criminal penalties nationwide from the judicial statistics bulletins of the national courts over the years. It should be noted that in recent years, courts have become more cautious in their judicial judgments of minors compared to adult criminals (for comparison, see Figure 4), and the number of judgments itself has a trend of decreasing over time. Meanwhile, variables such as economic growth have a trend of increasing over time. Inferring that the trends are caused by the correlation between these factors without considering other influences can lead to spurious regression. To eliminate this effect, we will add a time trend variable to address this issue.

Figure 4: Comparison of Punishment Rates between Adult and Juvenile Offenders




The selection of economic growth variables comes from the statistical yearbooks over the years. We have chosen unemployment rates, Gini coefficients, GDP growth rates, population numbers, and urbanization rates from the past 15 years, with specific data shown in Table 1. The unemployment rate data represents the labor market, reflecting the inhibitory effect of economic growth on juvenile delinquency as discussed above. The Gini coefficient reflects relative wealth, that is, the impact of distribution issues on juvenile crime rates. The GDP growth rate is used to represent the pace of economic development to determine whether the economy is in a period of prosperity, recession, or stagnation. The population number is used to estimate the juvenile crime rate to more objectively measure the changes in juvenile crime rates. Urbanization rate data is used to reflect the level of urbanization in society, and since cities have a more

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significant aggregating effect on the population, the urbanization rate, as an indicator of economic development, will also have some impact on the magnitude of juvenile crime rates. We list the data collected for this analysis in Table 1. We first construct a simulation equation between economic growth and juvenile crime rates: $Iny = a_1 Inpgdp + a_2 jx + a_3 ue + a_4 cl + a_5 t + a_6 Inpgdp^2 + u$, where Iny represents the logarithmic level of the juvenile crime rate, using the ratio of the number of juvenile judgments to the total number of criminal penalties as a proxy variable for this crime rate, Inpgdp represents the logarithmic level of per capita GDP, $Inpgdp^2$ represents the square term, used to reflect the non-linear change of per capita GDP, jx represents the Gini coefficient, reflecting social wealth disparity, ue represents the level of urban unemployment, cl represents the urbanization rate, t represents the time variable. The regression results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Data Analysis Table

| Date | Unemployment Rate (%) | Gini Coefficient | GDP Growth Rate (%) | Number of Minors Convicted | National Criminal Penalties Imposed | Population (in ten thousand) | Urbanization Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2002 | 4.00 | | 9.1 | 50030 | 690506 | 128453 | 39.09 |
| 2003 | 4.30 | 0.479 | 10 | 58870 | 730355 | 129227 | 40.53 |
| 2004 | 4.20 | 0.473 | 10.1 | 70144 | 752241 | 129988 | 41.76 |
| 2005 | 4.20 | 0.485 | 11.4 | 82721 | 829238 | 130756 | 42.99 |
| 2006 | 4.10 | 0.487 | 12.70 | 83697 | 873846 | 131448 | 43.90 |
| 2007 | 4.00 | 0.484 | 14.20 | 87525 | 916610 | 132129 | 44.94 |
| 2008 | 4.20 | 0.491 | 9.60 | 88891 | 989992 | 132802 | 45.68 |
| 2009 | 4.30 | 0.490 | 9.20 | 77604 | 979443 | 133450 | 46.59 |
| 2010 | 4.10 | 0.481 | 10.60 | 68193 | 988463 | 134091 | 47.5 |
| 2011 | 4.10 | 0.477 | 9.50 | 67280 | 1032466 | 134735 | 51.27 |
| 2012 | 4.10 | 0.474 | 7.70 | 63782 | 1154432 | 135404 | 52.57 |
| 2013 | 4.10 | 0.473 | 7.70 | 55817 | 1138553 | 136072 | 53.7 |
| 2014 | 4.09 | 0.469 | 7.30 | 50415 | 1164531 | 136782 | 54.77 |
| 2015 | 4.05 | 0.462 | 6.90 | 43839 | 1213636 | 137462 | 56.1 |

Table 2: Economic Growth and Juvenile Crime Rate

| Iny | Coef. | Std. Err. | | t | P>t | [95%Con] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inpgdp | 15.77343 | 4.115249 | | 3.83 | 0.009 | 5.703778 |
| jx | 5.688344 | 4.786585 | | 1.19 | 0.28 | -6.024007 |
| ue | -0.12106 | 0.2279 | | -0.53 | 0.614 | -0.6787093 |
| cl | 0.05811 | 0.02391 | | 2.43 | 0.051 | -0.0003956 |
| t | -0.06724 | 0.054533 | | -1.23 | 0.264 | -0.2006765 |
| Inpgdp2 | -0.79962 | 0.218259 | | -3.66 | 0.011 | -1.333681 |
| _cons | 51.86492 | 115.7515 | | 0.45 | 0.67 | -231.3687 |

From the regression results, it can be seen that over the past 15 years, the increase in China's per capita GDP has been consistent with the increase in the juvenile crime rate, and the coefficient of the per capita GDP level passes the test at the 5% significance level. This conclusion is obtained after controlling for the Gini coefficient, unemployment rate, urbanization rate, and time trends, indicating that, all other conditions being equal, as the economy grows, there is a trend of increasing juvenile crime rates. This part of the

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conclusion gives us a general understanding of the relationship between economic growth and juvenile crime rates, but we also want to know how the economic structure and social distribution issues behind economic growth affect juvenile crime rates. Therefore, we re-establish the model, adding the interactive effect of economic growth and social wealth disparity to the model, attempting to find the relationship between economic growth and juvenile crime rates under the premise of unchanged wealth disparity.

Interactive effect model: $Iny = a_1 1j + a_2 Inpgdp + a_3 jx + a_4 ue + a_5 c1 + a_6 t + a_7 Inpgdp^2 + u$, where the newly added variable 1j represents the interaction of the logarithm of per capita GDP and the Gini coefficient. The regression results are shown in Table 2, and from Table 3, it can be seen that the coefficients of individual variables are not significant, but after we conduct a joint F-test on the interaction term and the logarithm of per capita GDP, we find that the joint test is passed at the 5% significance level. In addition, the signs of the control variables, except for the unemployment rate, have not changed, considering that the coefficient of the unemployment rate is close to 0 in both of our models. Therefore, the model as a whole is credible after adding the interaction term.

From the regression results, the impact of per capita GDP on juvenile crime rates has changed after adding the interaction term. We find that based on the average Gini coefficient of 0.479 and the average logarithm of per capita GDP of 10.1, after differentiating per capita GDP, the impact of per capita GDP on juvenile crime rates becomes -0.48. This means that after adding the interaction term with the Gini coefficient, the impact of per capita GDP on juvenile crime rates has completely changed. Under the condition of unchanged Gini coefficient, as per capita GDP increases, juvenile crime rates tend to decrease. This result reveals the deep-seated issues behind the apparent positive impact of economic growth on juvenile crime rates, that is, the deep-seated factors affecting juvenile crime rates are in social wealth disparities, and economic growth itself has an inhibitory effect on juvenile crime rates.

### 3.2. Empirical results and comparative experience

In this empirical analysis, the rise in unemployment rates is also one of the factors leading to an increase in juvenile crime rates. This is corroborated by the research of Chen Chun liang and Yi Jun Jian, who show that the increase in China's criminal crime rates can be largely attributed to the decline in employment conditions for low-income groups, especially vulnerable groups, during the economic transition process. The decline in employment conditions has led to a deterioration in the living conditions of low-income groups, thereby inducing more people to "rationally" choose crime. Existing studies have shown that the decline in employment conditions for vulnerable groups can be attributed to the institutional segmentation of the labor market to some extent. These studies are also consistent with people's intuitive feelings. As mentioned in the first part of this article, the youth of working age often occupy the lowest end of the job market and are most widely affected by the economic environment. For minors who have not reached the working age, the decline in their family's economic income will directly lead to a deterioration in their own living conditions, thereby triggering the risk of crime through various channels such as education, family, and cognitive psychology. The impact of the urbanization rate on juvenile crime in our model shows a positive correlation, and existing literature indicates that cities, with their concentration of a large population, breed some criminal behavior, which is also reflected in the field of juvenile crime. Finally, we found that the promotion of juvenile crime rates by economic growth is not a linear relationship; as the economy grows further, the growth rate of juvenile crime rates shows a downward trend. This also corroborates the view mentioned earlier in the article that there is a spiral relationship between economic development and juvenile crime rates.

Table 3: Economic Growth Interaction Effects and Juvenile Crime Rate

| lny | Coef. | Std. Er. | t | P>t | [95%Con] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1j | -8.1845 | 11.31796 | -0.72 | 0.502 | -37.2782 |
| Inpgdp | 21.61249 | 9.143109 | 2.36 | 0.064 | -1.89063 |
| jx | 83.98243 | 108.384 | 0.77 | 0.473 | -194.628 |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ue | 0.063234 | 0.348385 | 0.18 | 0.863 | -0.83232 |
| cl | 0.052215 | 0.026221 | 1.99 | 0.103 | -0.01519 |
| t | -0.12442 | 0.097384 | -1.28 | 0.257 | -0.37475 |
| Inpgdp2 | -0.87367 | 0.249473 | -3.5 | 0.017 | -1.51496 |
| cons | 116.926 | 150.5002 | 0.78 | 0.472 | -269.947 |

## 4. Juvenile delinquency prevention - economic pathways of influence

### 4.1. Reduce poverty, boost legal resources

"Food is more important than the sky, and living in peace and contentment" Only after addressing basic survival issues can people live in peace. In real life, there are many cases where teenagers turn to crime due to family poverty. For instance, in the 2009 hostage-taking case in Guangzhou's Baiyun District, where two brothers took hostages to save their mother, the family was in severe financial difficulty and faced the illness of a family member, leading to a criminal act that is lamentable. Although it's an isolated case, it serves as a reminder that absolute poverty remains a significant cause of juvenile delinquency. Focusing on improving economic development levels not only increases the income of ordinary families and provides more job opportunities for working-age youth, but also allows governments and social welfare organizations to invest more financial and resource support into the prevention of juvenile crime. For example, strengthening legal education for young people is crucial, as current surveys indicate a lack of legal awareness and knowledge among young people in our country. According to a joint report by the Ministry of Education's Youth Legal Education Base and the China University of Political Science and Law's Youth Legal Education Research Center, the average correct rate in legal knowledge tests for surveyed primary school students was 63.8%; for junior high school students, it was 55.8%; and for high school students, it was 53%. Enhancing the legal knowledge and awareness of young people will play a positive role in preventing juvenile delinquency.

In addition to investment in legal education, economic growth can also bring hope to young people. The French existentialist philosopher Sartre once said, "Hope is a part of humanity; in terms of setting a goal and realizing it, human action is always nurtured in the present, moving from the present towards a future goal." During periods of economic prosperity, young people have a bright future and their lives are filled with hope. Psychologically speaking, as a form of spiritual strength, hope plays a positive role in individual initiative, self-confidence, and future orientation.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that poverty is not only about low-income levels and lack of capabilities but also introduces concepts such as vulnerability, lack of voice, and social exclusion into the category of poverty. They believe that those who are susceptible to external shocks and are internally isolated are in a state of poverty. These individuals are on the margins of politics and society, without a voice, lacking legal protection, and to some extent, socially excluded. Thus, the concept of poverty has evolved from material poverty to rights poverty by the end of the 20th century. Rights poverty refers to the lack of basic human rights in political, economic, cultural, and social aspects. In our economic development process, it is also crucial to pay attention to the rights poverty issues of these young people.

### 4.2. Focus on economic distribution and narrow the wealth gap

The World Bank released a highly impactful report in 2007. Between 2001 and 2005, despite China's economy growing at an annual rate of 10%, the actual income of the poorest 10% of the 1.3 billion population decreased by 2.4%. Compared with this period, the number of criminal penalties for minors in our country soared from 50,000 to over 80,000, and the coherent relationship between the two can be seen. For the youth group, their physical and mental development is still in progress, and under such realistic conditions, this group is more likely to be influenced by the external environment than adults. The issue of wealth disparity may more easily affect the youth group's view of things, eventually leading to crime through various other manifestations. What we need to pay particular attention to is that the wealth disparity issue is not simply manifested as unequal distribution of wealth; it may also be reflected in unequal distribution of opportunities, processes, and outcomes. Because the side that accumulates wealth can often

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obtain more social resources and occupy more real opportunities, thus ultimately obtaining a satisfactory result. On the other hand, those at the bottom of the wealth scale are often dissatisfied with the results of their self-worth realization, leading to negative emotions, which ultimately lead to specific paths of criminal behavior that are complex and diverse. From a multidisciplinary perspective, this may also involve psychological factors and be closely related to the inner feelings during the growth process of adolescents, especially in early years. For example, in the sensational Ma JiaJue case, Ma JiaJue, as an ordinary university student, killed four classmates in three days, and his motive for murder has always been a surprise and puzzle to the public, experts, and scholars. In fact, although Ma JiaJue's family was very poor, he did not show dissatisfaction with his poor life before entering university. After entering university, his social relations suddenly became rich, and he could no longer immerse himself in his studies; he had to interact with people and learn to deal with injustices in life. At this time, he found that his family's poverty made his knowledge and social interaction abilities lower than those of other students. After some accidental events acted as a catalyst, the tragedy was inevitable.

From the above analysis, we see that relative poverty leads to inequality in opportunities, processes, and results. Therefore, in the process of economic development, attention should be paid to equal opportunities, fair processes, and transparent outcomes. From the larger institutional framework, cultural influence to legal protection, we should give adolescents in relative poverty a future full of hope.

## 5. Conclusion

How to prevent juvenile delinquency is a concern for the whole society. In addition to working in the field of legal construction, we can also look at this issue from the perspective of economic development. The existing empirical literature on the relationship between economic growth and juvenile crime rates is not rich enough. This article dissects the impact of economic development on juvenile crime by combining the trial data of minors from the Supreme People's Court with data from the China Statistical Yearbook. In this process, in addition to verifying some existing conclusions, we also innovatively found that the impact of economic growth on juvenile crime needs to be discussed at different levels of social development (wealth disparity, institutional construction, etc.). Ultimately, the relationship between economic growth and juvenile crime rates presents a spiral change, which also solves the puzzle of why juvenile crime rates are relatively stable in the long term, while short-term fluctuations are relatively intense.

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