

THE THEORETICAL LOGIC AND SYSTEMATIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE JUVENILE CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT SYSTEM

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Abstract: The label of a previous criminal record severely impedes the resocialization process of juvenile offenders. To counteract this negative effect, establishing a system for the elimination of minors' previous criminal records has emerged as a prevalent trend in the international community and a widely shared social consensus. This system serves as special protection for minors' rights and interests and is an inevitable requirement for promoting the construction of criminal integration. Although current Chinese laws have already established the exemption of minors from the obligation to report previous criminal records and the system for sealing criminal records, a genuine system for eliminating minors' previous criminal records has yet to be established. In judicial practice, it still confronts numerous challenges, including ambiguous regulations on the methods of elimination, a narrow scope of application, and unclear stipulations regarding the probation period for elimination. Thus, guided by the principle of legality of crimes and punishments, a systematic construction of this system should be implemented to effectively safeguard minors' rights to reintegrate into society.

Keywords: Juvenile criminal record expungement; Criminal record sealing; Theoretical logic; Reintegration

1 INTRODUCTION

Establishing a juvenile criminal record expungement system to help minors involved in crimes reintegrate into society is an inherent requirement for implementing the holistic view of national security, maintaining social stability, and promoting the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity.

Against this background, China has successively carried out exploratory work on the juvenile criminal record expungement system. For instance, a proposal to add a juvenile misdemeanor expungement system to the Criminal Law has been placed on the legislative agenda. However, the juvenile criminal record expungement system has not yet been truly established in China. The existing criminal record sealing system has alleviated the practical demand for such a system to some extent, but it fails to adequately highlight the particularity of protecting minors' rights and interests.

Although academia has recognized the importance of the juvenile criminal record expungement system, existing research has mainly focused on conceptual definitions, basic principles, and legitimacy of the expungement system[1], without paying sufficient attention to the interaction between the expungement system and the criminal record sealing system or the systematic construction approach for the juvenile criminal record expungement system. This shows that China's juvenile criminal record expungement system is still in its initial stage, lacking an operable overall design scheme and failing to form a comprehensive legal protection system for minors.

Therefore, this paper takes the theoretical logic and systematic construction of the juvenile criminal record expungement system as its core research focus and addresses the following three interrelated and progressively advancing issues: First, it explores the theoretical logic of the juvenile criminal record expungement system, explaining why this system is legitimate and necessary. Second, it focuses on the specific practice of the juvenile criminal record expungement system, extracting and revealing its practical characteristics and real-world problems from current regulations. Finally, in response to the specific operational issues of the juvenile criminal record expungement system, it proposes actionable improvement plans and systematically constructs the juvenile criminal record expungement system.

2 THEORETICAL LOGIC OF THE JUVENILE CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT SYSTEM

2.1 External Logic: The Expungement System is an Inevitable Requirement of Integrated Criminal Justice

Integrated criminal justice is a research methodology in criminal law proposed by Chinese scholar Professor Chu Huaizhi. It refers to the integration of criminal law and criminal procedure law to revitalize the overall resources of criminal rule of law, fully leverage its functions in crime governance and human rights protection, better implement the criminal justice policy of "reducing arrests, cautious prosecution, and prudent detention," minimize unnecessary arrests and detentions, and thereby safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of criminal suspects and defendants[2]. Through integrated criminal justice research, the relationships between laws can be better coordinated, contradictions and conflicts in legal application can be reduced, and the consistency and coherence of legal application can be promoted, which is conducive to improving judicial efficiency. In addition, integrated criminal justice can help judicial authorities more accurately grasp the nature and characteristics of crimes, formulate more scientific and reasonable

legal application standards, achieve differentiated treatment of different crimes, and thus better respond to changes in crime structures. It is evident that the juvenile criminal record expungement system is a positive response to the construction of integrated criminal justice for the protection of minors' legal rights and interests.

In the process of continuous improvement and development of the criminal justice system, the juvenile criminal record expungement system has gradually become an important issue of concern. This system does not exist in isolation but is an inevitable product and important component of the concept of integrated criminal justice. It is of great significance for realizing fairness and justice in criminal justice, protecting the rights and interests of minors, and maintaining social harmony and stability. As a special social group, minors are physiologically and psychologically immature, with relatively weak cognitive abilities and self-control, and are susceptible to negative external influences that may lead them to commit crimes. This particularity determines that juvenile justice cannot be simply equated with adult justice. Therefore, it is necessary to establish special mechanisms different from those for adults. The juvenile criminal record expungement system is a concrete manifestation of this particularity in the field of juvenile justice, and the concept of integrated criminal justice further strengthens the particularity of protecting minors' rights and interests.

In fact, integrated criminal justice supports the juvenile criminal record expungement system from multiple dimensions. At the conceptual level, integrated criminal justice, through the coordinated efforts of public security organs, procuratorates, courts, and other institutions, conveys to society the judicial concept that "minors are highly adaptable and should be given opportunities for rehabilitation," reshapes society's acceptance of minors involved in crimes, and creates a favorable social atmosphere for the expungement system. At the methodological level, the effective implementation of the juvenile criminal record expungement system cannot rely solely on a single judicial process. Integrated criminal justice can integrate investigation, prosecution, trial, and other judicial processes to ensure the effective operation of the expungement system. At the ideological level, the particularity of juvenile justice lies in prioritizing the protection of minors' rights and interests. Integrated criminal justice runs this principle through the entire judicial process, from case filing to the final decision on whether to expunge records, always striving to minimize the harm of judicial procedures to minors and help them return to the right path, ensuring that the handling of juvenile cases is conducive to their growth and development. Through integrated operation, it provides judicial protection for minors involved in crimes that is different from that for adults, promoting their genuine rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

2.2 Internal Logic: The Interactive Relationship Between the Expungement System and the Criminal Record Sealing System

Criminal records and criminal history (prior convictions) exhibit a dialectical unity—the former serves as the object of evaluation, while the latter constitutes the evaluative conclusion. The two are not equivalent. Criminal records refer to objective documentation by state authorities regarding an individual's criminal conduct, whereas criminal history denotes the adverse legal status derived from such records.

As a carrier of objective facts, criminal records meticulously document the specifics of an individual's past criminal acts, including the time, location, means, and consequences of the offense. They represent a neutral, value-free account of the criminal event itself. In contrast, a criminal history is a normative evaluative judgment based on these records. When an individual possesses a criminal record, the law applies certain standards to affix the label of "having a criminal history." This label not only reflects past criminal conduct but also embodies society's negative assessment of the behavior[3].

The criminal record sealing system serves as the foundational prerequisite for the expungement system. Since the evaluation constituting a criminal history originates from criminal records, expungement must begin with sealing. Only after a minor's criminal records have been properly sealed can the evaluative consequences (i.e., the criminal history) be eliminated[4]. The expungement system represents a deeper institutional development beyond record sealing. After a reasonable observation and evaluation period confirms that the minor has demonstrated the capacity and conditions for social reintegration, this system fundamentally removes the barriers created by past criminal conduct. It restores their equal social standing.

Some scholars have observed that record sealing and expungement are two sides of the same coin—neither can stand alone[5]. These systems operate in complementary yet distinct dimensions: Record sealing functions at the procedural/factual level, primarily protecting privacy rights. When a juvenile case reaches a specific stage and meets defined criteria, judicial authorities seal the records. This process restricts public access to prevent arbitrary queries or dissemination, thereby minimizing negative impacts on the minor's future. Expungement operates at the substantive/evaluative level, representing a more profound legal remedy. It aims to fully restore the individual's social status and civil rights. Expungement legally erases the evaluative consequences of past crimes, freeing the minor from all legal restrictions tied to their criminal history and enabling reintegration under a "clean slate"[6].

2.3 Core Value: Special Protection for Juvenile Rights in the New Era

Throughout societal development, the treatment of minors with criminal records has remained a profoundly significant issue. In the new era, China has placed increasing emphasis on protecting juvenile rights, enacting a series of laws and regulations that establish preferential safeguards for this vulnerable group. In fact, as early as the late 20th century, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child established the principle of the "best interests of the child," requiring states

to take all appropriate measures to ensure children's rights are fully protected. The newly revised Law on the Protection of Minors (2021) codified the "most favorable treatment for minors" principle, which aligns closely in both connotation and value with the international standard. This represents a localized adaptation of the "best interests" principle within China's legal framework, serving as the foundational philosophy and basic tenet of juvenile judicial protection[7].

Adult criminal behavior typically stems from rational deliberation—a "conscious defiance" of social order, often involving premeditated violations of established norms. In contrast, juvenile delinquency is more accurately characterized as an "incidental phenomenon" during development. Minors undergo critical physical, psychological, and moral formative stages where their cognitive abilities, judgment, and self-control remain underdeveloped. External negative influences during this vulnerable period may inadvertently lead them astray, resulting in passive engagement in criminal acts[8]. This passivity underscores juveniles' unique circumstances and justifies specialized judicial protections.

As German scholar Liepmann observed, "Punishment itself is a form of education." Beyond retributive functions, penalties serve rehabilitative purposes through correction, education, and moral transformation. China consistently adheres to the governance principles of "education first, punishment supplementary" and the operational guideline of "educate, influence, and redeem" for juvenile offenders. The educational approach prioritizes protection—compared to purely punitive measures, it intervenes in minors' development through constructive methods that guide positive growth, exerting deeper and more lasting impacts on their wellbeing.

The juvenile criminal record expungement system plays an irreplaceable role in safeguarding special rights and facilitating reintegration. By eliminating discrimination and barriers from prior convictions, it enables minors to access education, training, and career development in a fair and inclusive environment, equipping them with essential social competencies. Simultaneously, the system fosters societal acceptance of rehabilitated youth, cultivating a supportive atmosphere for reintegration. Through neutralizing the adverse effects of criminal records, the expungement mechanism creates optimal social conditions for juvenile development—a concrete implementation of both the "best interests" and "most favorable treatment" principles.

3 CURRENT STATUS OF THE JUVENILE CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT SYSTEM

3.1 Historical Evolution of the Juvenile Criminal Record Expungement System

The localized exploration of the juvenile criminal record expungement system has a long history in China. In its early stages, as the concept of special protection for minors gained traction, legal scholars began focusing on the issue of juvenile criminal records. Drawing on international experiences while adapting to China's national conditions, scholars initiated theoretical research on the expungement system.

Concurrently, practical explorations were undertaken at the local level. Courts in Hebei, Shanghai, Sichuan, Shandong, Jiangsu, and other regions established pilot programs and introduced relevant regulations and measures[6]. A significant legislative milestone was achieved in 2012 when Article 275 of the Criminal Procedure Law explicitly stipulated that criminal records should be sealed for individuals who committed crimes under the age of eighteen and received sentences of five years imprisonment or less.

This marked China's first statutory establishment of a juvenile criminal record sealing system, complementing the 2011 Amendment VIII to the Criminal Law, which introduced provisions exempting juveniles from the obligation to report their criminal history. These legal developments demonstrated efforts to mitigate the adverse consequences of juvenile criminal records and provide special protection for minors, laying a partial legal foundation for the expungement system. However, it is important to note that China has not yet formally established a comprehensive juvenile criminal record expungement system.

3.2 Normative Examination of the Juvenile Criminal Record Expungement System

As mentioned earlier, the criminal record sealing system and the expungement system respectively belong to the two dimensions of procedural law and substantive law. From the perspective of procedural law, the provisions regarding the criminal record sealing system are relatively comprehensive. The 2012 revised Criminal Procedure Law formally established the juvenile criminal record sealing system. In 2022, the "Two Supremes and Two Ministries" jointly issued the "Implementation Measures for the Sealing of Juvenile Criminal Records," which further refined the regulations, clarifying the content of sealing, sealing measures, inquiry procedures, sealing entities, and accountability mechanisms. However, from the substantive law perspective, there is a clear lack of legislative provisions regarding the juvenile criminal record expungement system. There are no unified legislative stipulations on the specific methods of expungement, scope of application, probation periods, etc., leading to inconsistent standards in pilot programs across different regions and making practical implementation difficult.

Taking the "Pilot Scheme for the 'Expungement of Criminal Records' of Juvenile Offenders" first introduced by the Pengzhou People's Court in Sichuan Province in 2007 as an example: the scheme first limited the applicable subjects to minors who were under the age of eighteen at the time of the crime and were sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of five years or less, while excluding recidivists and first-time or occasional offenders with relatively serious criminal circumstances; secondly, the initiation method was mainly by the court ex officio; finally, a certain probation period was set, but the specific probation period was not clearly defined. This shows that although the scheme made provisions

regarding the applicable subjects, methods, and probation periods for the expungement of juvenile criminal records, the provisions were relatively general and still needed further clarification and refinement.

3.3 Practical Dilemmas in the Juvenile Criminal Record Expungement System

Undoubtedly, establishing a juvenile criminal record expungement system in China is a complex and systematic project involving multiple factors, including theoretical research, legislative construction, judicial practice, social attitudes, and the broader social environment. The transition from conceptualization to practical implementation of this system requires specific environmental support and a series of supporting institutional safeguards. Consequently, the advancement of the juvenile criminal record expungement system in China inevitably faces several practical obstacles, primarily manifested in the lack of relevant legal provisions and narrow applicability.

3.3.1 Unclear provisions on expungement methods

There are various conceptual approaches to expunging juvenile criminal records, but legal norms and practical operations remain ambiguous. The main methods include automatic expungement, application-based expungement, and pardon-based expungement, yet each lacks clear and uniform standards.

- Automatic Expungement:

This refers to the automatic removal of a juvenile's criminal record if, within a legally prescribed period, the minor does not engage in any conduct prohibited under expungement regulations. This model offers procedural simplicity and certain advantages: It significantly conserves judicial resources, allowing authorities to allocate more attention to other pressing judicial matters. It prevents minors from being subjected to non-standardized evaluations during the process, mitigating the negative psychological effects of a criminal record and facilitating smoother reintegration into society[6].

- Application-Based Expungement:

Under this method, a minor who has complied with all expungement requirements during a statutory probation period—without violating any prohibitive conditions—may, upon the expiration of the probation period, submit an application to a designated state authority along with supporting documentation. The authority then conducts a comprehensive review of the materials and the minor's conduct during the probation period. If the review is favorable, the expungement request is approved[9]. However, the conditions, procedures, and specific discretionary standards for such applications remain undefined in law.

- Pardon-Based Expungement:

This involves the expungement of a criminal record through a pardon granted by the head of state. Yet, the scope, frequency, and specific rules for pardoning juvenile records lack clear stipulation[10].

The absence of clear expungement methods leaves judicial authorities without uniform standards or procedures when handling cases, leading to irregular practices that undermine judicial efficiency and quality. In addition, unclear requirements for evidence and documentation in expungement applications may spark conflicts between applicants and judicial bodies during evidence collection and review, potentially affecting case outcomes.

3.3.2 Narrow scope of application

Under China's current legal framework, the provisions on exemption from criminal record reporting obligations and the criminal record sealing system strictly limit the applicable subjects to minors sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of five years or less. A deeper analysis reveals the unreasonableness of this restriction.

Some minors may commit relatively serious offenses due to momentary impulsiveness or negative environmental influences, yet they possess strong rehabilitative potential and capacity for reform. However, due to the limitations in the current system's scope of application, these minors are excluded and continue to suffer the negative effects of a criminal record. They face various forms of discrimination in daily life, which may foster antagonistic attitudes toward society, further alienate them from social integration, significantly increase their risk of recidivism, and contribute to social instability[11].

Concurrently, society must allocate more resources to manage and supervise these minors with criminal records, resulting in resource wastage and increased social costs. This clearly contradicts the fundamental objective of modern criminal policy to promote offenders' rehabilitation.

Furthermore, the Criminal Procedure Law's provisions on criminal record sealing only apply to minors convicted of misdemeanors, while excluding minors for whom the procuratorate decides not to prosecute or whom the court exempts from criminal punishment.

3.3.3 Unclear provisions on the probation period for expungement

The expungement system typically stipulates a probation period—a specific timeframe after a minor completes their sentence or is legally exempted from punishment, dedicated to comprehensively and thoroughly assessing the minor's repentance and reform regarding past criminal conduct[10].

Regarding minors who have been sentenced to public surveillance, criminal detention, probation, fixed-term imprisonment of varying durations, or exemption from criminal punishment, China's current laws and regulations have not yet established specific provisions on eligibility conditions for initiating criminal record expungement procedures and required duration of the probation period prior to expungement.

Due to the lack of clear provisions on the probation period, judicial authorities face difficulties in determining when to process the expungement of a minor's criminal record during implementation. This ambiguity may lead to discrepancies in handling methods across different regions and cases, undermining the uniformity of judicial standards and, consequently, the fairness and authority of the judiciary. Moreover, minors involved in crimes may endure prolonged

psychological stress due to uncertainty about when their criminal records will be expunged, adversely affecting their mental health and normal lives.

4 SYSTEMATIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE JUVENILE CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT SYSTEM

4.1 Guiding Principle: The Principle of Legality

The principle of legality, embodied in the maxim "no crime without law, no punishment without law," requires that the application conditions, procedures and legal consequences of the juvenile criminal record expungement system must be explicitly prescribed by law. Neither the scope of application nor the procedural requirements can be arbitrarily expanded or restricted.

Article 11 of the Legislation Law provides that matters concerning crimes, punishments and deprivation of citizens' political rights must be prescribed by law. Although criminal record itself does not constitute punishment, the collateral consequences of record reporting functionally resemble disqualification penalties. From the perspective of legal certainty and normative requirements, any restrictions or deprivations of rights arising from criminal records should be clearly defined in statutory law to prevent uncontrolled expansion. Public power must not exploit criminal records to extend punitive authority or impose extra-legal penalties on offenders.

In practice, beyond laws, administrative regulations and local rules, many entities impose occupational restrictions on individuals with criminal records through recruitment policies or internal regulations. This creates a situation where both public and private actors appear empowered to restrict offenders' qualifications, potentially leading to governance disorder and violating the fundamental spirit of "no punishment without law" under the principle of legality.

It is evident that regulations on criminal records that do not conform to the proper hierarchical legal framework should be systematically reviewed and rectified[12]. The "law" in the principle of legality should be strictly construed as statutes enacted by the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee. While laws such as the Civil Servant Law, Judges Law and Prosecutors Law may legitimately restrict employment of those with criminal records, other normative documents lack such authority. Since criminal record provisions concern deprivation of citizens' fundamental rights, they must be strictly limited to NPC legislation to prevent excessive penalties and maintain compliance with the principle of legality.

4.2 Pathways for Constructing a Juvenile Criminal Record Expungement System

To address the practical challenges identified in the juvenile criminal record expungement system, a systematic framework must be established under the guidance of the principle of legality. This ensures the system operates scientifically and reasonably within the rule of law, achieving a balance between legal and social outcomes to comprehensively protect the legitimate rights and interests of minors.

4.2.1 Refinement of expungement methods

The expungement system should primarily utilize application-based elimination, supplemented by automatic elimination, with pardon-based elimination reserved for special circumstances. Application-based elimination should be the main approach as it grants minors the initiative to seek expungement and respects their autonomy. The applicants should principally be the minor offenders themselves. However, considering some minors' young age and immature mental development may limit their understanding of consequences, or other objective factors may prevent them from applying personally, the law should authorize guardians to apply on their behalf to ensure effective implementation of the system and protection of minors' rights. When no guardian exists or when guardians face conflicts of interest or inability to apply, juvenile protection organizations or procuratorial organs should assume this responsibility to provide necessary legal support.

The accepting authority should preferably be the juvenile court that rendered the original judgment, as these specialized courts possess the necessary expertise and experience to properly evaluate expungement applications while considering minors' unique circumstances. Applicants must submit comprehensive materials including details of the offense, demonstration of remorse, rehabilitation progress, and post-release adjustment in education and daily life. The court must conduct thorough review focusing on the minor's repentance, personal risk factors, and recidivism likelihood, potentially through community visits and school/workplace evaluations, before making a final expungement decision[9].

Automatic elimination serves as a supplementary approach that respects minors' developmental patterns. For minor offenses with limited harm where the minor remains law-abiding for a statutory period, records should be automatically cleared without requiring application. This reduces psychological burden and conserves judicial resources, though the elimination period must be carefully calibrated based on offense severity and the minor's age to maintain appropriate legal deterrence without hindering reintegration.

In special circumstances such as during national celebrations or other significant occasions, pardon-based elimination may be granted to qualified minors meeting criteria including minor offenses, exemplary rehabilitation, or outstanding contributions during emergencies. The pardon power should be exercised by designated state authorities (the head of state or a specialized pardon committee) following strict review procedures that evaluate the minor's contributions and social impact to ensure fairness and appropriateness.

4.2.2 Appropriately expanding the scope of application of the criminal record expungement system

Most countries that have established juvenile criminal record expungement systems generally do not impose specific requirements regarding the severity of offenses. For example, Article 21 of the Beijing Rules emphasizes the confidentiality of juvenile offender records and explicitly states that these records cannot be cited in subsequent adult proceedings involving the juvenile, without distinguishing between minor and serious offenses. In China, the scope of application of the juvenile criminal record expungement system should not be limited to minor offenses only. From a more comprehensive and legally sound perspective, the system should apply to all juveniles sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment or lesser penalties. Even for some juveniles sentenced to more than five years of fixed-term imprisonment, it cannot be conclusively determined that they necessarily pose a greater personal danger. The probation period for expungement should be differentiated based on the severity of the offense, with longer probation periods set for those receiving heavier sentences, rather than categorically excluding them from the scope of application.

However, from the strategic perspective of safeguarding national security, ensuring social stability, and protecting public safety, and in line with the policy orientation of strictly combating and effectively preventing drug crimes, the identification mechanisms for special recidivists and drug re-offenders exhibit the notable characteristic of having no time limitations. Given the significant harm and severe impact of these types of crimes, applying the expungement system to individuals who have committed such offenses may weaken the deterrent effect of the law and increase social security risks. Therefore, crimes endangering national security, terrorist activities, organized crime, and drug offenses should not be eligible for the expungement system[6].

Additionally, records of non-prosecution and conditional non-prosecution should also be sealed. It must be clarified that if such records become known to the public, they are highly likely to negatively impact the juvenile's reintegration into society. Juveniles who receive non-prosecution should be presumed innocent; in terms of the degree of culpability, they are clearly less culpable than those sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of five years or less, and their non-prosecution records should be strictly sealed[13].

4.2.3 Refining the provisions on the probation period for criminal record expungement

The primary purpose of establishing a probation period for criminal record expungement is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the offender's personal dangerousness and likelihood of recidivism. The probation period should be set scientifically and reasonably based on multiple factors, including the nature and circumstances of the juvenile's crime, the severity of the punishment, and their rehabilitation progress.

Globally, the French Penal Code sets corresponding probation periods based on specific sentences. For example, if an offender is sentenced to imprisonment of no more than one year, their rights may be restored five years after serving the sentence. If the sentence is no more than ten years, the probation period extends to ten years after serving the sentence. The Russian Penal Code determines the probation period primarily based on the severity of the crime and the imposed penalty. Specifically, if an offender is sentenced to a penalty less severe than deprivation of liberty, the probation period is one year after serving the sentence. For minor or medium-severity crimes, the probation period is three years after serving the sentence[14].

Drawing on international practices and considering China's specific legal context, the probation period for juvenile criminal record expungement in China should be established as follows:

- Exemption from criminal punishment or imposition of supplementary punishment only: A probation period of six months is appropriate.
- Public surveillance or criminal detention: A probation period of one year is appropriate.
- Fixed-term imprisonment of less than five years: A probation period of three years is appropriate.
- Fixed-term imprisonment of five years or more: A probation period of five years is appropriate.

The probation period should commence from the date of completion of the sentence or the granting of a pardon. For juveniles given a suspended sentence, the probation period for expungement should begin after the completion of the suspension period and be equal in duration to the suspension period. If a juvenile demonstrates significant meritorious performance during the execution of their sentence, the above time limits may be waived.

Additionally, a dynamic adjustment mechanism for the probation period should be established. If a juvenile demonstrates exceptional performance during the probation period—such as active participation in psychological counseling or vocational training with excellent results, or outstanding contributions to public welfare activities—the probation period may be appropriately shortened. Conversely, if the juvenile violates laws, regulations, or probation requirements, the probation period may be extended. This approach not only incentivizes active rehabilitation but also ensures the seriousness and effectiveness of the system.

5 CONCLUSION

The establishment of a juvenile criminal record expungement system carries profound significance. It not only creates a more tolerant judicial environment for minors involved in crimes to reform themselves and reintegrate into society but also fully demonstrates the state's and society's deep concern for juveniles who have gone astray. This system accurately embodies the value of justice in law, reflecting both special protection for minors and the fairness of the legal system, thereby achieving an organic unity of legal and social effects[15].

Educating and rehabilitating juvenile offenders to facilitate their reintegration into society is a paramount task in juvenile protection. The construction of a juvenile criminal record expungement system is imperative. The systematic development of this system is a vast, complex, and multifaceted social endeavor. In addition to the legislative improvements mentioned earlier, it requires the establishment of a comprehensive social collaboration mechanism, with

strong support from multiple sectors including judiciary, administration, civil affairs, human resources, education, and labor. Together, these efforts should form a tripartite protection system integrating family therapy, school education, and community correction[9].

By taking the systematic construction of the juvenile criminal record expungement system as an opportunity, advancing institutional development and theoretical exploration may contribute modestly to China's legal safeguards for juvenile rights and interests. This initiative not only aligns with international standards for juvenile justice but also reflects the humanitarian spirit of the rule of law, paving the way for a more inclusive and rehabilitative approach to juvenile delinquency in China.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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