

Juvenile Delinquency

Bio-Psycho-Social Bases of Deviance

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ABSTRACT: Although juvenile delinquency is a social and legal phenomenon, it is an individual act with individual characteristics in a concrete situation. Behavioral alterations are the basic elements of deviance and delinquent activity, and, in young people, these alterations are intense even in persons with balanced social, emotional, familial and material status. Important alterations are usually caused by defect internal and external stimulation leading to behavior disorders. In adolescents, behavioral disorders are usually persistent and repetitive actions as a response to a disrupted interaction between the child and his environment but cause damages to social and moral values. Therefore, juvenile delinquency is a multidisciplinary, complex phenomenon with disproportional relation between the biological elements, external stimuli, and internal emotional and psychological management of these elements.

KEYWORDS: behavior, disorder, deviance, adolescents, socio-psychology, delinquency

Introduction

To fully understand what juvenile delinquency means and before thinking about prevention and corrective actions, the phenomenon must be extracted from the conceptual definition and viewed as an assemble of individual characteristics that define the active subject of the term: a young growing person in the middle of extreme responses to extreme changes. Adolescence is a period of biological, psychological, emotional, and especially neurological transformation with important impregnations from the external environment. Family, society, material and educational status act as stimuli that trigger responses with major roles in building the future adult. Sometimes, their reactions can be disrupted or extreme, leading to altered behavior and deviance.

General aspects of deviance

As delinquency, deviance is a complex concept rather than a well-defined term. That is because the definition of deviance has multiple explanations depending on the domain that defines it. Sociologically, deviance is considered to be a violation of written and moral norms of a collectivity – from a simple denial of the rule to offenses and actions to defy that rule, actions which endanger social structure, its people, and its balance. Legally, deviance equals law-breaking behavior and in this domain, it can be a synonym with delinquency. Psychiatry and forensic medicine describe deviance as a subsequent concept of behavioral and personality disorders or as a symptom of other psychiatric pathologies. This domain offers a more intricate description of what deviance is, depending on the situational and pathological individual context. Psychology opines that deviance is as much as an individual as a collective aspect defining it as divergences inside social groups which lead to opposition between minorities and the majority. Individually, it is a variable deviation of behavior, thinking or identity of individuals from the normal values of society and morality. Inside the religious and specific cultural group, deviance can

have more specific moral and ethical definitions and it can be more drastically sanctioned inside the group (Aizer and Currie 2019, 75-587).

Deviance is a general and universal existing element of every society and community. Wherever there are laws and rules there will be disrupting factors. Another characteristic of deviance is variability as rules cover every aspect of society and every breakage will be analyzed and sanctioned differently. But the most important aspect of deviance is relativity. Relativity resides in some variable characteristics: for deviance to be recognized and sanctioned as such, that act has to be visible; in some normative system an act can be considered as deviant but in other systems, it may be permitted; on the other hand, the context of the deviant behavior is very important as it will variate the specific of the action; there are also subjective aspects on the way deviance is defined; social and collective response and reaction will depend on the economic, social status, sex, culture and other aspects of the individual; the community has a very important role in recognizing deviance as it can isolate a behavior and respond to it as it's incidence and area grows and the affected group's tolerance diminishes (Blîndul 2013).

There are multiple ways of classifying deviant behavior. While this paper states the type of behavioral problems that have negative impact on the environment, there are classifications that state about a positive deviance. Positive deviances are deviations from stereotypes and regulations with the goal of innovation and evolution. Of course, cultural extremism and nonconformity can be defined as a neutral deviance as it does not affect any internal or external element of the environment. There are some authors that state the existence of serious and easy deviant behavior such as violence and murder versus alcohol addiction. It is important to underline the fact that any behavior that endangers the self of the active subject or the people around is equally important because in both situations, an element of a socio-familial system is disrupted. Visibility is another characterizing element as some behaviors can be easily recognized but others are hidden (sexual deviance, some incipient alcohol or drug addictions). As stated above, deviance is variable and relative depending on the domain and set of rules it breaks. There are legal deviance such as felonies, socio-political deviance such as terrorism, familial disruptions such as domestic violence and abuse, moral deviance such as dissimulation and personality disorders, religious deviance such as fanaticism, self-destructive behaviors. There are some publications that still discuss the problem of sexual deviance but as society evolves, sexual freedom and rights tend to eliminate some of them from this concept. There are elements that remain in this section but enter also under the legal aspect such as sexual behaviors regarding children. An important aspect of these describing factors is whether the discordant behavior is individual or it defines a group belief and activity. Of course all of these definitions enter under a medico-legal matrix where all of them can be analyzed in specific situations and may embrace a pathological or non-pathological classification. There are aberrant behaviors which include psychiatric disorders that manifest with behavioral discordance and lack of discernment, so as long as the voluntary aspect of the action is missing, the course of action is not a sanction but will be a protective, rehabilitee measure. Deviant activities are defiant and nonconformist behaviors that could easily damage social balance and could become, in time, antisocial behaviors that define illicit activities and aspects that are penalized by the law (Cheianu 2016, 72-76).

The causes of deviant behavior and juvenile delinquency in adolescence

Risk behavior in teenagers is a multiple cause concept. There are biological, social, familial and psychological factors that are permanently interconnected in directly and indirectly

proportions. In order to simplify the description, there is a way of organizing triggering elements of behavior disorders as internal and external factors. To correctly analyze behavioral changes in adolescence, these elements must be considered as individual influence and also as a sum of influences.

Internal factors

An important aspect of adolescence is the severe and abrupt anatomical and physiological changes that transform and prepare the body into the future adult. The period is full of challenges for the child but also for the social, familial, and educational system as the stimuli they receive and the way they respond in this period will define a major part of their personality. The first aspects that trigger those changes are the neurobiological reactions that change the internal balance. These reactions are a mixture of regression and evolution that translates into behavioral, emotional, physical and character developments. Two important cerebral activities that subside the neuro-psychologic transformation: loss or increase of neuronal connections in different parts of the brain and elevated myelin formation which will reconfigure the brain in the adult form. There is also a thinning of grey matter and a growth of white matter and also a major hormonal release that impregnates especially reproduction, emotions and impulses beyond cerebral and volitional control. The effects of these reactions are increased responses to educational and external stimuli but also loss of control over emotional and impulse responses as the specific areas of brain are hyper-activated in this period, affective and sexual behavior will be stimulated and strategic thinking, adaptation and other cognitive functions are heightened and interfering with the other factors that will define outer responses. An interesting phenomenon is the increased dopaminergic activity that will trigger satisfaction and rewarding systems and it is a major vulnerability to addictions and other behaviors that seek short or long term needs and gratifications. In terms of personality and behavior, biology is reflected into increased emotional sensations and reaction, frustration, psycho-emotional lability or emotional indifference, low self-control, impulsivity, aggression, indifference for rules, despising and defying attitude, opposition and rejection for law and social law, questioning morality and ethics, underestimating antisocial activity and tendency to egocentrism. All of these changes can be considered normal until some point but the external stimuli will decide the consequences these changes will have on the child's personality (Casey, Getz and Galvan 2008, 62-77).

Another aspect regards aberrant behavior in adolescents with cerebral organic dysfunction or intellectual deficiencies. While for the first group, behavior oddness, non-voluntary aggressive reactions and maladjustment are more specific, for the second group, mild to medium deficiency describe a lot of the adolescents involved in criminal activity (Copeciuc 2018, 49).

The familial environment is influencing the child since early years. The interpersonal relationship with family members, the internal set of values, the perception and attitude towards the child, acceptance or disapproving of the child's actions, reward and sanction pattern, existence of abusive or violent behavior are the main factors that affect the young through puberty and adolescence and a lot of these influences will remain during the adulthood. In terms of behavioral disorders, some of the most important elements present in cases of delinquency can be a disorganized family system, conflictual and abusive climate, and permissive attitude, authority problems such as indifference or autocratic and overprotective behavior. Although the family is not an internal factor, it is the immediate close environment that the child spends most time in. All aspects of family will have a direct impact on the child giving him the first line of principles and values that he will operate with (Delcea, Fabian, Radu and Dumbravă 2019, 370-371).

External factors (macro-social aspect)

The next circle of influence after family resides in the social space with all its constitutive elements: social status, community system, cultural and religious characteristics and economy. Poor social status, lack of material resources, habitation in disrupted communities and areas with high criminal activity rates, low access to modern infrastructure and cultural stimulation are just a little part of the macro-social factors influencing the young individual by creating a disproportional relation between necessities and possibilities and choosing illegal means to get the needs they have is easy to choose when there is already a neurobiological propensity to defiance and lack of impulse and emotion control. Also, mass-media and social-media are a big motivational trigger for non-realistic desires which will lead to hazardous risk-taking and defiance for low and social norms (Dishion, Nelson and Bullock 2004, 515-530).

Educational and group factors (micro-social aspect)

As stated above, information absorption and educational activity are heightened activities during this period. A correct approach and a healthy educational stimulation are keys to a positive development to adulthood. Familial primary education is the structure on which school is adding specific intellectual and social stimuli. But the informational matrix received in the school environment is not all that matters. The scholar environment, from the group of colleagues inside and outside the class, to the type of school and the type of educative system used, multiple elements will influence the child behavior and will set a big part of his attitude and personality. Connection to the other children, socializing and being part of a group has the first impact as the characteristics of these relationships will determine the way the child adapts to school environment and responds to the learning activity. Stigmatization, isolation, integrative and relational deficits can negative influence the way the adolescent responds to education inside school environment and, on how the future adult may respond to society. Intellectual stimulation is vital not only for professional and intellectual purposes but also for changing one's system of principles and values. Lack of interest in school, inappropriate and disrespectful attitude toward teachers and other authorities, school abandoning and interests for easy satisfactory results are the main characteristics of children with behavioral problems. Adding an outside group with negative values and antisocial tendencies will only worsen the status of the adolescent because groups tend to give him empowering sensations and courage for defiance and rebellion but also it can influence choices and goals by being a fake positive model and principle set (Dukes and Lorch 1989, 239-251).

Unfortunately, in some cases, the educational system has flaws that also negatively influence the adolescent. For children with low efficiency in school, there can be a major disruption between their expectations, the school's expectations and the family expectations which will cause frustration and adaptation problems with negative outcomes in behavioral and personality aspects. Also, lack of extracurricular and artistic activity or insufficient in-school motivation for these domains can leave out talented children and frustrating them by making them not adapted and not aligned to the *normal educational parameters*.

School is not always prepared to face all types of students and all types of situations, especially institutions from rural areas and there have been stated some cases in which the problem resides in the teacher's manner of communicating, motivating and working with the teenager, especially with children that have behavioral problems. The external stigmatization from family, school groups and educators will turn into self-stigmatization and low self-esteem in adult life with possible antisocial and risk behavior during adolescence (Glenn and Raine 2014, 54-63).

Psychological characteristics of adolescents with deviant behavior

Psychological processes are heightened and chaotic in this period even on a normal basis. Analyzing the elements of psychopathology regarding deviant behavior, it is possible to contour the picture of the problematic adolescents that could need more attention from the micro and micro-social environment.

After 14-15 years old, the child has discrimination capacity over details which will allow him to analyze and respond to various stimuli. Every sensation and the perceptive process is increased or overreacted and he searches for originality and adrenaline and a chance to be recognized and accepted.

Language is an essential part of the attributes of every individual assimilates. By 18 years old, an adolescent is capable of distinguishing usual language and academic language, using them correctly to drive his social integration, he has also a scientific language and he starts to develop an individual way of expressing himself. Deviant behavior will describe the opposite of that: difficult expressing, hostility in or to communications, using trivial expressions to overcome poor language skills, vague answers and irritability and irascibility when forced to sustain a dialogue more than he is capable to. (Herrero, Estévez and Musitu 2006, 671-690).

Understanding the manner of thinking of a teenager is a challenge even in normal situations. In behavior disorders, abstract operational thinking defects are usually recognized. Also, there is a distorted self-analyze and critical view of reality with low awareness of the importance of social and interpersonal activity (Sturman and Moghaddam 2011, 1704 – 1712).

If in normal conditions, imagination is the process that helps a child to discover himself and the world around him, getting him dreams, desires and goals, in behavioral disorders we can find an increased imagination and vivid dreaming without a solid real foundation. Also, we can see a brutal oscillation between a reality that is not satisfactory for him and an extreme idealism.

Long term memory is what prevails at his age, recording information and organizing his space and time inside the general space and time concept. In behavioral disorders, short term memory is more developed than long term memory and affective memory exceeds verbal and effector memory which leads to discrepancies and non-realistic expectations and motivational executory processes (Kjelsberg 1999, 276-282).

Learning is analyzed as an external factor but also as an internal one as self-analyze and self-conduction are important aspects of the adolescent process. Learning skills in school are exceeded by learning through and from experiences that the child considers beneficial or model. Copying behaviors and attitudes are specific to this period and more prevalent in cases of negative influences (Thomson 2016).

Deviant behaviors tend to approach two kinds of personalities in extreme manners. The extrovert tends to have authority issues with violent tendencies, defiance of rules, and a need to control and dominate his environment. On the other hand, the introvert is usually a child from vicious familial climate, that is easily influenced and conditioned in negative activities and some of them tend to acquire dependencies as their will is not strongly developed (Steinberg 2013, 513-518).

Affectional processes and sexuality tend to govern the adolescent's will and activity. As sexual awareness increases and emotional neuronal and hormonal processes are heightened, impulse control and rational processes decrease, putting the child in a vulnerable, contrasting position. The adolescent can pass between extremes very easily, from intense feelings to emotional indifference with contradictory attitude and intense psycho-emotional lability. In some cases, intense feelings and low impulse control can

drive teenagers to lead risk activity with law-breaking and important moral swerve (Lo, Cheng, Wong, Rochelle and Kwok 2011, 48-55).

In the matter of intellectual stimulation, 2 extreme groups engage in risk behaviors – children with low or limit intelligence or children with very high intelligence. But intellectual stimulation and IQ is not the main problem but one of the factors. The problem that triggers behavior disorders and deviance is the major cognitive dissonance, with eliminating real and authentic values with easy acceptance of fake values (Şatalan and Şatalan 2018, 198-201).

Chaos and extremism define the character and personality of adolescents with behavioral problems with 3 main characteristics – lying, instability, and impulsivity. We can describe these elements from the legal medicine point of view, like the incapacity of maintaining or establishing attention and attitudes, of having constant and uniform reactions, and correctly assess a situation and motivate an action (Lybbert, Ryland and Bean 2019, 98-104).

Risk behavior and delinquency manifestations in adolescents

In the matter of forensic psychiatry, the most frequent felony that adolescents are engaged in is theft. Usually, it starts inside the family and then extrapolates in the external environment and it transforms rapidly from small value items into important sums or assets. There are other delinquent activities that theft is associated with and in most of the cases, it is a group action. Motivation and circumstances of theft are important as they describe the teenager's socio-familial problems. As far as motivation goes, there is the imitational activity, conditioning, and incentive auctioning, compensational or necessity acts or even revenge acts, usually accompanied by violent outbursts (Silveri, Dager, Cohen-Gilbert and Sneider 2016, 244-259).

Running away and vagrancy represent a sudden and abrupt escape from a vicious familial climate as a reflexing of emotional and psychological intense stress. Some children run away from school or family as a result of conflictual states or that manifestation can reside in a need for thrilling experiences and adventure or because they need to stand out in a defiant way.

Some authors are considering scholar failure as a deviant subsequent behavioral element. Both subjective on objective opinions have to take into consideration the fact that educational failure is not entirely the fault of the adolescent's inner and outer characteristics but also, we have to consider familial and scholar factors as equally guilty. If a subjective opinion is allowed, school failure is more o a socio-familial system's failure than a child's fault.

Psychopathological manifestations can enter the domain of delinquency (pyromania, psychotic violent manifestations) but they enter the field of medical therapy and social protective and rehabilitation protocols. The presence of critical discernment is the main subject in psychopathology and forensic psychiatry and these cases require special protocols and intensive psychological and pharmaceutical care (Markova and Nikitskaya 2017, 36-46).

Drug, nicotine, and alcohol addiction is another deviant behavior that not only endangers social balance and systems but also the self of the active subject. First of all, dopaminergic activity in cerebral functions represents a vulnerability for developing addictions in adolescents. On top of that, depression, the need to escape from unsatisfactory reality and anxieties are pushing these children into this kind of risky behavior. Cerebral and biological side effects are also a serious mortality and morbidity factor in the moment of substance abuse and for the future. As for social and legal aspects of the problem,

violence, and felonies that subside from the addictive activity and behavior are the main concern (Scheppers 2017, 143-159).

Sexual deviance is another element of behavioral disorders. Sexual awareness and emotional impulses appear during puberty interacting with other bio-psychological factors, it is normal for every adolescent to be in a curious and continuous search for his sexual identity and satisfaction. The problem appears when experiences tend to be exaggerated in search of exhibitionism and defiance or when violent acts and psychoactive substance consumption are added.

Aggression and homicide are the most serious phenomenon appearing in this age period with serious legal and social consequences for the active subject and for the affected persons. Premeditation is not specific for these cases but accidental events during other delinquent activities may happen (theft with violent attack of conflictual situations with fatal blows where the active subject could foresee the consequence of his action but didn't because of the high impulsivity and lack of emotional control) (Nicolaescu, 2017).

Depression and suicidal behavior in adolescents are more serious than adult depressive disorders. Fragile characters and personality, in the middle of neurobiological abrupt transformations and conflictual situations in a socio-familial environment or unsatisfactory state regarding the internal and external expectations, added to frustrations, psycho-emotional lability and instinctual profound disruptions can lead to a critical integrative and adaptive deficits with depressive manifestations that are hard to control and attend. Some symptoms are even hard to recognize especially during the last years when social-media has ruptured reality from media-reality distorting the adolescent's system of values and life expectations and leading to the creation of fake life story and identity to be recognized in a fake world. The result is severe sadness with low motivation, self-negative perceptions, feelings of solitude, uselessness, hopelessness, underestimating the meaning of life and social values. Some of these children fight this situation by referring to drugs and alcohol but in severe cases, consuming or not consuming substances can lead to the same result – the perception of life futility and suicidal behavior with high rates of fatal results. The *honest* suicide has a high rate of success because preliminary symptoms are hard to recognize in most of the cases and the suicide attempt is well planned and conducted. This is the reason why psychological assessment in school and integrative efforts are important for all adolescents, especially those with negative material, familial and educational stimulation. It is important also to separate authentic depressive behavior from the demonstrative forms of depression and suicidal attempts. Demonstrative suicidal behavior is a form of emotional blackmail in order to influence decisions and sanctions regarding the teenager's actions or it could be a form of attention deficit. The symptoms in these cases, are not only visible but extreme and even theatrical and the suicidal attempts are also dramatic but in medical terms, not a true life threatening situation. Cases in Romanian pediatrics clinics include often multiple painkiller pills like ibuprofen and acetaminophen or superficial excoriations on anterior face of the arms but not deep enough to affect blood vessels. These types of behavioral problems need other approaches and attention in a scholarly and familial environment (Roman 2018).

Conclusions

Behavioral disorders in adolescents, deviance and delinquency have roots not only in the extreme and aberrant conduit of the child but it is also a deficit of social, legal and familial and educational system that is not always prepared to support these cases. Conclusions on this paper are organized in an attempt to structure a prevention plan as preventive actions are more beneficial than corrective processes which tend to have less positive outcomes. Future development of the child is important and integrative,

educative and psychological measures are vital before the teenager makes severe mistakes with important consequences. Limits to prophylaxis in this matter reside in the fact that it can concentrate actions on causes and factors which can be corrected in short term with immediate effects.

Prevention of juvenile delinquency must act on all environments and levels that involves the life of the adolescent and it must go in 2 directions: one is a development action, with modeling the young man's social and moral values and respect for education and law as he will grow to be a healthy and operational active subject of society; the other approach is the disrupting and eliminating negative influences and factors in the child's life. This is not only an action that starts with the individual himself but also a social effort, starting from the negative factors inside the cultural, political, and educational organization of society (Young, Greer & Church 2017, 21-29).

Of course, every state and every social system has its specifics and significant negative and positive factors so prevention is characteristic to every community depending on their cultural, religious and educational values. But beyond that aspect, there is a uniform present element in all societies with vital importance in prevention and rehabilitation of these cases. Every antisocial act and every active subject of delinquency or deviance is viewed as a negative factor and the immediate social response is isolation, stigmatization and elimination of that factor. This is the main reason why most of the problematic adolescents don't have real chances of changing their lives for the better or readapting to healthy systems and therefore, they will continue to remain in a defect environment and act against the system that removed them. Acceptance, understanding, real chances for integrative and adaptive processes and sustained psycho-social attendance for these adolescents may offer a real chance, especially when familial and material environments are not beneficial. Also, a child that has undergone corrective measures for delinquency activities must be adapted to normal social environment as fast as he exits the sanctioning program. Putting them into continuous special educational care and stigmatization can be traumatizing in the way that the child will understand that he will never be normal and his place will never be in a normal social life, even when he exists in the adolescent period. That would be the reason for delinquent and deviant behavior relapses and as the individual evolves to adulthood, the negative factors will have more and more influence on his personality, behavioral disorders leading to psychopathological manifestations or severe delinquent activity with more serious implications.

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