

EXAMINING SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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Abstract

Objective: Among the goals of any community are order and security-based social life. In a community with social norms broken, social solidarity is lost, and chaos leads to disruption of social order and, in some cases, the collapse of the social system. One of the complex problems drawing the attention of many psychologists and sociologists is the issue of juvenile delinquency, which is becoming more and more widespread. The purpose of the study was to examine the social and psychological factors that affect juvenile delinquency.

Method: The study tried to examine the effect of social and psychological causes on juvenile delinquency with a descriptive survey research method.

Results: Prevention methods should be adopted in line with the conditions and situations of these people as the causes and elements of crime among the children differ from adults, and this class of society has a more sensitive psychological and social status and is way more vulnerable than others, and the cause of crimes is often not a single one, but several causes, such as personal, social, economic, cultural, health, political, religious, family, and other factors always go hand in hand in individuals.

Conclusion: Juvenile delinquency is not limited to a specific factor, but a set of elements go hand in hand for a child or adolescent to engage in behaviors that, although not seemingly a crime. However, as these behaviors occur during their psychological development and growth, they set the stage for a crime in a specific sense and sometimes turn a child into a professional criminal.

Keywords: Individual and social factors, prevention, delinquency, children and adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Delinquency is a very complex social phenomenon observed in various forms in different social environments. The definition of crime and delinquent behavior in any society is specified by the legal laws and social norms of

that society. Delinquency is an act that the law considers criminal. Hence, juvenile delinquency is a social phenomenon with crimes committed by children and adolescents different in terms of instances and have relative validity. This relativity is based on age, gender, crimes committed, place, and time (Najafi

Tavana, 2019; 19). Crime was the first phenomenon that showed itself with the gathering of people around each other and the formation of society. The coming together of people led to the disobedience of various conflicts between them. Therefore orders and regulations emerged to benefit individual freedom to some extent, restrict society and determine the boundaries of each member of society. Criminological studies indicate that every effect has a cause, and nothing happens by itself. Thus, every crime has constructive causes affecting the person leading him to incompatibility and abnormality (Shaygan and Jebelli, 2010).

Childhood is a period full of future-shaping moments. If healthy growth conditions are created for the child, this growth will take a positive turn, and the child will be at risk of deviating from the path of healthy growth if such conditions are not met. This class of people is considered the main capital of any country, with a key role in the dynamism and continuity of the life of the social system and its comprehensive growth and development in the future. The delinquency problem in this class must be considered a serious obstacle to the flourishing of individual talents and the development and progress of a country or a city (Jalaiepour and Hosseini Nesar, 2008: 79). Social deviance and delinquency among adolescents could cause insecurity and disorder as a social problem. The spread of deviations in society and its deepening among various groups of youth and adolescents turn into sub-values in society and gradually weaken the values and norms that govern society (Pika, 1991).

Moreover, one must state that children and adolescents are the spiritual assets in any society. The focus on issues associated with children and adolescents will lead to positive consequences in the future and adulthood for this social class. As juvenile delinquency is not usually considered a serious, organized, and large-scale crime in society, it is irrelevant to the crime itself and its repression; however, more importantly, studies indicate that committing a crime in childhood will result in more serious crimes in adulthood. Hence,

communities reach two benefits by focusing on preventing juvenile delinquency. One is to prevent possible mild delinquency in childhood, and the other is to prevent severe delinquency in adulthood. One of the factors that result in delinquency in children and adolescents is mental, emotional, and mood disorders, which the legislator has paid special attention to. Mental health disorders destroy perception and consciousness rendering the person unable to assess, measure and understand the results of life affairs and issues, unable to distinguish between good and bad and profit and loss and expediency and corruption, especially if the person in the ages childhood and adolescence, and when inappropriate social and educational backgrounds are provided for it, it will turn unto ground for crime.

Thus, based on those above, the children and adolescents need support and anticipation of strategies to reduce or eliminate criminal factors because of having some characteristics making them potential victims. Hence, prevention programs need to be tailored to children and adolescents' individual, social, and psychological conditions to bring about results.

One can name some cases that have examined some causes and factors of juvenile delinquency:

In evaluating the effectiveness of internal and external family factors on juvenile delinquency, Mohammad Reza Meshkani and Zahrasadat Meshkani concluded that only three factors affect the severity of delinquency and can explain it. They are the factor of delinquency dependence on the family, beliefs, attitudes, and relationships with criminals. The results indicated that the stronger the adolescent's dependence on the family, the lower the severity of delinquent acts. Religious beliefs are deterrents to delinquency, and negative attitudes toward law, law enforcement, and social norms reinforce delinquency. Ultimately, they concluded that intimate and continuous contact with criminals strongly renders adolescents delinquency.

In the study of social factors that affect primary and secondary delinquency of children, Salehi, Pourmohebi Abadi, and Salarirad (2012) concluded that the family, neighborhood and group of friends' status had the greatest effect on primary delinquency of children and teacher violence, expulsion from school, long-term illegal detention, the violence of detention officers and correctional centers, and the negative consequences of the prison environment are of the critical elements in the community around these children that could affect their secondary delinquency.

In a paper entitled "Analytical study of the effect of social dimensions, family and personal characteristics, cognition on the emergence of delinquency," Rezaei et al. (2007) argue that delinquent adolescents are more familiar with criminal factors than their peers. Moreover, the history of parental condemnation, divorce and emotional incompatibility between parents, their upbringing style, family income style and parental supervision and attention is effective on delinquency.

Methods:

The study was descriptive with a survey design with the data collected through library studies and visiting websites. The data collected was then reviewed, categorized and summarized, and their similarities and differences were examined. The document mining method was used for data collection. Accordingly, all books, documents, Internet resources, papers and studies available to the researchers, who have studied these concepts, were examined, and notes were taken.

Results:

1. Family role in preventing juvenile delinquency

Special attention has been paid to family institutions in the law to protect children and adolescents, approved on May 12, 2020. Overall, the law has tried to give much importance to the family, as we consider the

family as the cornerstone of society, and the role of the family and the risky environments that may exist for the child the family in various cases. For instance, Article 36 of this law states that more interventions need to be made in the family sphere, and if there is a need and danger for the child, he should immediately be expelled from that environment. In Article 42, the court could make decisions and impose restrictions on custody, visits, etc. Article 22 vividly states in different paragraphs that if, in some crimes, the family and guardians are indifferent towards the child or cause the crime, the punishment will be increased for them. Thus, it is natural that if a family abuses its child, it should be punished more. In cases where we expect parental support, but we see the opposite, they should face increased punishment. Articles 7 to 18 of the law have focused on people who cause harm to children too.

Moreover, besides their mission to help families raise children, society and the government have direct responsibilities to children, particularly the children with problems. This section examines these problems.

1.1. Children with mistreating families

They are the families where children and adolescents do not feel comfortable. They are the families who use physical and psychological violence against their children and families whose parents or one of them is addicted or at risk of breakup and divorce. In such cases, "special authorities" have to be turned to reform the family or take effective care of their children.

In this regard, Article 12 of the Riyadh Guidelines states: "The governments need to adopt policies for the upbringing of children in stable family settings and provide the necessary services to address instability or conflict in the family."

The prerequisite for any action in this regard is awareness of such a dangerous situation in families. This makes establishing an accurate information system in this regard necessary. All members of society from all walks of life,

children and adolescents, need to be aware of the existence of special child protection institutions, such as the Children's Commissioner, the Child Police, and NGOs that work in the field of child and adolescent protection, so that they could easily communicate with those institutions and describe the dangerous states of children and adolescents (Akbari: 2003, 86).

Albert Bandura and Richard Walters have stated that both persistent corporal punishment and excessive negligence in controlling young boys' behavior by parents lead to juvenile delinquency. To them, boys usually beaten by their fathers rely on external controls; instead of basing their decisions on their inner sense of right and wrong, they are more likely to be trapped in performing any action. On the other hand, boys who have always faced the approval and encouragement of their parents in the face of any action have grown up with the mentality that whatever they do is good and acceptable (Gass, 2013: 289).

These problems in the family (especially physical and psychological violence) render teens leave home prematurely. Thus, they might become homeless and even commit crimes to survive. Hence, adopting policies to provide the necessary facilities for such children to tackle and prevent crime is necessary.

Strategic responses to runaway children must mostly focus on providing youth centers and emergency shelters and access to boarding schools for longer periods and the efforts to reintegrate them into their families and deter children from fleeing their homes. Furthermore, considering the child's right to protection against abusive parents, the reasons for leaving home need to be carefully examined before deciding on the possibility of their return home and family to resolve the existing problems. An understanding is reached between the family and the child so that the child does not have conflicts and tensions with his family again when he returns home. Moreover, other services like counseling, life skills training, and job search assistance should be provided to runaway adolescents. Hence, social workers

need to be located in the vicinity of police stations in each location to provide immediate assistance in the form of crisis intervention (Parvizi: 2010, 51).

In cases where families have young children or adolescents and at the same time are particularly emotionally disturbed or at risk of disintegration, counseling and guidance centers are among the special authorities that can take action to improve the state of these families. These centers can help parents understand and respond to specific problems associated with adolescence properly and help their children avoid the negative pressures of the peer group.

Child custody includes accommodation of children in government centers (institutions) and assigning a guardian (guardian or stepfather/stepmother) suitable for older children. Concerning assigning a caregiver, precise and efficient rules should be enacted. Child resettlement officials should identify interested and deserving families to care for children and give them children and adolescents in need of care while always being informed of the situation in the new family environment. Foster families must receive financial and educational support concerning this. For instance, in the Philippines, the relationship between broken and abusive families and juvenile delinquency has declined because of their support and the strong social structure in which adolescents are at risk (Shoemaker, 2005: 234).

Concerning this, the extended family that might include surrogate parents and uses peer pressure to exercise discipline and control could provide a haven where group members can build new relationships, gain a sense of self-worth, and reach emotional and financial independence. The extended family concept is the support for the youth at risk by combining the stability of family life with the ancillary elements of education, vocational skills training and employment, and is rooted in the community itself.

1.1.1. The effect of child abuse on juvenile delinquency from a psychological perspective

Psychologically, child abuse is the various forms of behavior that result in physical, psychological, emotional, and mental abuse of the child and disrupt the normal stages and health of the child. In defining the types of child abuse, the second article of the Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents (adopted in 2002) states any harassment of children and adolescents that causes them physical, psychological and moral harm and their physical or mental health. It is forbidden to endanger. Based on this definition, the nature of child abuse is harassment; thus, the perpetrator needs to have general and specific malice and seek to harass the child. The material element of this crime is physical injuries and psychological injuries such as mental distress, anxiety, depression, etc. (Moazzami, 2013: 53).

The consequences of child abuse can be examined physically and psychologically. Psychological manifestations of child abuse are mental disorders such as depression, conduct disorder, borderline personality disorder, multiple personality disorder, attention deficit disorder, antisocial behaviors and delinquency, aggression, especially with family members and self-harming behaviors and low self-confidence and having negative perspective toward oneself and others are of the side effects of child abuse. Considering the different consequences of child abuse, it is reasonable to expect that these children and adolescents engage in delinquent and criminal behaviors as they grow up in a high-risk environment (Tahmasebian, 2012: 19).

1.1.2. The types of child abuse are as follows:

Physical child abuse: cases such as beating and kicking, hitting, cauterizing, burning, burning with a spoon, breaking bones, injuring, causing internal injuries including internal bleeding, pulling ears and hair, slapping, pinching, throwing, squeezing, shaking, whipping, using cigarette fire, biting, putting pepper in a child's mouth, banging his head against a wall, causing blackness and bruising on the child's body and

any other form of bodily injury, bruising, scratches, hurting, swelling and the signs of belts, claws, teeth and nails are examples of physical child abuse. Child physical abuse is the first type of child abuse most often in poor and vulnerable families. Premature child labor in farms and underground workshops and on the streets before 15 years of age, as well as child abductions, to seek revenge on parents or to extort money, child abuse is a major example in all countries of the world. Of the children enacted in 1988, he defines physical abuse as injury to a child under the age of 18 by the parents or their immediate guardian responsible for their well-being and comfort so that the child's health and safety are endangered according to the laws compiled by the Ministry of Health (it happens because of the addiction or imprisonment of one of the parents). (Mosharrafian and Dehkordi, 2017: 38)

Psycho-emotional child abuse: cases such as humiliation, ridicule, blame, rejection, emotional deprivation, violent behavior, verbal abuse, severe and unreasonable control, teasing, intimidation, inappropriate expectations, violence against the spouse in front of the child, swearing and all actions that severely negatively affect the psychological functions of the child's behavior and development are examples of psychological-emotional child abuse. Emotional abuse includes emotional, verbal, and mental abuse that results in behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or intellectual disorders in the child that, besides economically disadvantaged families, are seen in relatively affluent families. Unluckily, many parents do not consider these cases child abuse. Child abuse is more prevalent toward children with physical and mental disabilities, and sometimes the disabled become victims of violence by parents, the education system and society (Keshavarzian: 2011, 2).

Child sexual abuse: child sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child and an adult is child sexual abuse. The interaction may include a wide range from sex to showing an adult's penis to a child, forcing a child to show an adult's penis, forcing a child into prostitution, child pornography, etc. The

prevalence and normality of much verbal sexual violence among various social groups are sometimes such that the level of sensitivity has reached zero. Thus, such groups do not recognize verbal violence at all, as child sexual abuse is not recognized as a problem in some countries. Sexual abuse of children is usually hidden given its abominable nature and is revealed too late because of the child's silence. Therefore, there are no physical findings or evidence to substantiate the issue in many cases. Sexual harassment also includes rape and sexual exploitation. Sexual harassment, unfortunately, is increasing, especially among girls. Showing sexual behaviors, rape and contact, and exploiting children to gain pleasure and satisfy a sexual desire is considered sexual harassment (Habibi, 2017: 113).

Educational child abuse: The injuries and harassment caused to the student by the educational system and generally, by teachers, teaching methods, book content, and so on fall into this area. However, in many cases, educational harassment, such as student humiliation, is accompanied by physical harassment such as corporal punishment or psychological harassment, but in general, ignoring students' differences, creating unhealthy and intense competition between them, creating psychological pressure, and so on are considered as educational abuse instances (Mosharrafian Dehkordi, 2017; 38).

Economic child abuse: Economic abuse is defined as the abuse and exploitation of a child to earn money and not allocate that income to the child himself. Forcing a child to work outside the home, forced labor, begging, and being forced to do income-generating work at home are instances of this type of abuse (ibid.).

Neglect-driven child abuse: This type of child abuse occurs unintentionally and due to negligence. This means that the lack of necessary and sufficient attention of parents to provide for the child's basic physical and psychological needs and the low and minor relationship of parents and guardians with the child is called neglect-driven child abuse.

Negligence in providing the child's basic physical and mental needs such as nutrition, clothing, cleanliness, expression of love and affection, lack of proper upbringing, and so on can be discussed as neglect-driven child abuse (ibid.).

1.1.3. The effect of harassment on the behavioral aspects of personality

The effects of harassment on the behavioral aspect of personality include the following:

Aggression: Aggression is of the consequences of being bullied, and studies have shown that men and women abused during childhood were at risk of committing violent crimes. Hence, prolonged exposure to bullying predisposes the child to violence in the future.

Lack of social skills: Abused children lack the social skills required to adapt to preschool and school environments. The behavior of these children ranges from isolation to extreme aggression, and for this reason, their classmates reject them. Social skills are a key element in shaping relationships and improving the quality of individuals' social interactions and mental health. These skills could be seen as a complete behavioral model in interpersonal relationships.

Delinquency: Zingraf (1994) compared 522 abused children with 256 normal children concluding that abused children had more delinquent behaviors. Studies associated with the long-term effects of child abuse have revealed that most adolescents and adults experiencing four types of traumatic events as children more than others identify themselves as alcoholics, addicts and users of illicit drugs (Habibi, 2017; 10).

2. Psychological factors affecting juvenile delinquency

One of the elements resulting in delinquency in children and adolescents is mental, emotional, and mood disorders, which the legislator has well considered. Mental health disorders destroy perception and consciousness rendering the person unable to evaluate, measure and understand the results of life affairs and issues, distinguish between good and bad and profit and loss and expediency and corruption. This is

especially the case if the person is in childhood and adolescence when inappropriate social and educational backgrounds are provided, becoming a context for the crime.

Psychologists consider different elements at play involved in juvenile delinquency. Delinquency is connected to various psychological traits, some of which are below average intelligence and aggressive mood. Psychologists have proven that delinquents have far lower self-esteem than other people do. If we consider juvenile delinquents' past, we will see that the vast majority of them have been harassed somehow. In psychological terms, there is a theory among a group of psychologists that if a child abused is an extrovert; they will retaliate in various ways in the future. Additionally, the extent of harassment and the duration of this harassment are effective factors in committing crimes in children and adolescents, referred to as child abuse.

The welfare of society depends on the upbringing of children, and for society to grow and excel, the child must be educated and prepared for responsibility and life in society. Child abuse is considered a part of black crime because due to the physical and mental weakness of the victim regarding the abuse of their rights and abuse, they are not typically charged or prosecuted. In an environment where the child considers it safe and expected, if the child is abused, it will have devastating and irreparable effects in the future. It will hurt the community it did not support. This child or adolescent might have committed a crime or been a victim of a crime. The child needs support as he does not have enough mental powers and has not yet reached adulthood. According to psychologists, childhood has a very strong recording power, children hear things, record, and future information remains in human memory. If a child sees behavior from his parents towards himself, he processes this behavior differently, and if the inappropriate behavior is outside the child's comprehension, the processing will be wrong, will remain in his memory, and will appear as inappropriate behavior in the future. The efforts to increase children's mental health and

enhance their living conditions can be an effective measure to prevent juvenile delinquency.

2.1 Mental disorders among the children

The studies by Hollingshead and Redlick (1972) have focused on the social causes of mental illness. Hollingshead was a sociologist specializing, and Redlick was a psychiatrist. The results of the studies by these two show a definite relationship between social classes and mental illness. Most studies on anxiety stress the significance of parent-child relationships and culture as major and influential factors in increasing anxiety disorders (Rubin and Mills, 1991: 302).

Although various experts have offered various definitions of abnormal behavior or mental disorders in children, it is still one of the most difficult challenges in the field of child's psychological pathology. The prevalence of childhood disorders is estimated to be between 6 and 25% (Mash & Barkley, 2002).

There is a mental disorder in childhood where the child's behavior is contrary to a social contractual and relative criterion. This means that the behavior occurs with such frequency or intensity that adults with power and privilege, who live in the child's environment, recognize it in these situations too much or too little (Alipour and Mohammad Ismail, 1991; 18).

Elsewhere, childhood disorders, as transient morbid reactions, refer to situations where the child is experiencing an internal emotional conflict without the symptoms of the brain disease or severe adult syndromes (Azad, 1992; 45).

2.2. Common mental disorders in children and adolescents

Childhood psychiatric disorders or developmental disorders primarily treated by child psychiatrists may include the following:

- Anxiety disorders: These are common in children, often caused by constant fear, worry, or anxiety, impairing their ability to participate in play, school activities, or social situations. These disorders mainly include

social anxiety problems, generalized anxiety disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

- Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Compared to most children of the same age, children with ADHD have difficulty concentrating, controlling impulsive behaviors, hyperactivity, or a combination of these.

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): This neurological disorder appears in early childhood, usually before three years of age. Even though the severity of ASD varies, it is common for all children with the disorder to have difficulty communicating and interacting with others.

- Eating disorders: Disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can result in emotional and social dysfunction and life-threatening physical complications for children.

- Depression and bipolar disorder: Depression is a feeling of constant sadness and loss of interest that impairs children's ability to function properly in school and to interact with others. Moreover, the bipolar disorder results in severe mood swings and severe emotional or behavioral outbursts that may be dangerous or unsafe.

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): It is a disorder manifesting as long-term emotional distress, anxiety, disturbing memories, nightmares, and disruptive behaviors in response to violence, abuse, injury, or other traumatic events.

Schizophrenia is a disorder of perceptions and thoughts that causes a person to lose touch with reality (psychosis). Schizophrenia often appears in late adolescence to the 20s, causing hallucinations, delusions, and irregular thoughts and behaviors.

Conclusion:

Nowadays' children are the constructors and managers of tomorrow society and will assume the main role of organizing and guiding the

community and determining its goals. Dealing with child rights and its various aspects and building a healthy, logical, and real-world for the children besides considering the personality of a human will be a guarantee for building a better future for human society.

Children and adolescents are the spiritual assets of society, and the health of their souls and body guarantees the health of society in the future. A wide range of thinkers considers one of the social problems is the delinquency of children and adolescents, which is a new issue for many social issues and belongs to the modern era. Juvenile delinquency is one of the problems human societies face today that, if left unnoticed, can involve the individual and endanger society, incur many costs for the country, and create social insecurity. Juvenile delinquency is not limited to one specific factor, but a set of factors go hand in hand so that a child or adolescent is engaged in some behaviors. Although these behaviors are seemingly not a crime, they lead to committing a crime in a specific sense, and sometimes a child becomes a professional criminal as these behaviors happen in developmental and psychological development. The type of crimes children commit differs from adults in terms of causes, motives, and quality of the acts committed. As the most important and vulnerable sections of society and given their weakness in physical and mental dimensions, children need support and caring for them is a priority in any situation. Thus, understanding the social, economic and psychological status of these offenders (children and adolescents) by educators, social workers, police officers and all those who are in contact with children and adolescents can be helpful for careful planning and rehabilitating them to minimize crime in society and for more and better support for children and adolescents.

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