

About peer groups and their role in the emergence of juvenile delinquency.

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Abstract:

Peace groups are considered one of the social groups that play an important role in the socialization process. They constitute an influential factor in juvenile delinquency, given their powerful influence on the juvenile's personality and behavior.

They also represent a social environment that contributes directly to changing the thinking and behavior of adolescents. Some behaviors are consistent with and compatible with the general context of society, while others deviate from it.

Most juvenile delinquents acquire many behaviors as a result of being influenced by their friends.

The causes of juvenile delinquency are numerous, including economic, cultural, personal, and social factors. However, the peer group remains one of the most important factors leading to this phenomenon.

Keywords: Peer Group, Delinquency, Juvenile Delinquency.

Introduction:

The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is a common and complex topic, one that continues to be the subject of controversy and debate among various scientific trends and theories, and one that all societies currently suffer from.

The phenomenon has become widespread in recent years, due to several factors and causes, including: the absence of the family's role, which is considered the primary social institution in raising and educating children. This has led children to resort to socializing with peer groups, which are considered the second most important social institution after the family in terms of socialization. This group influences children and their behavior and can push them toward delinquency.

1)- Definition Of Peer Group:

Researchers have differed in naming a specific group of children or adolescents. Some call it a peer group, while others call it a group of friends. Despite the differences in the names given to this type of social organization, the underlying message remains the same.

The term "peers" refers to adolescents who are similar to the child in terms of social, economic, educational, or age status. (Abu Jado, 1998)

2)- The Importance Of Peer Groups:

Peer groups are considered a social group that plays an influential role in the process of socialization. It is a group whose members share a common culture, are often close in age, and may be from different age groups. The peer group imposes a normative or behavioral system on the child when he or she assumes various roles. However, the group's influence on its members is more powerful due to their shared common concepts.

The peer group's position has the power to pressure an individual and compel them to engage in activities they would not be able to undertake alone. These activities may have an impact on changing their behavior.

The extent to which an individual is influenced by their peer group depends on the relationship between them and its members. The stronger this relationship, the more likely the individual will adhere to the behavioral patterns imposed by the group.

Hamed Zahran summarizes the impact of peer groups on socialization as helping the individual develop physically by providing opportunities to exercise, mentally by engaging in various hobbies, and socially through emotional relationships in situations not available in other groups. They also contribute to the formation of social norms and criticism of other social norms of behavior. They also help individuals assume new social roles, such as leadership, developing psychological attitudes and self-reliance, self-realization, assuming social responsibility, and fulfilling needs, including the need for belonging. From the above, we find that the peer group during childhood and adolescence is of great importance in shaping and directing attitudes, interests and inclinations and determining the course of an individual's behavior according to the standards of those groups. The individual may learn deviant behavior from them and a positive and successful, normal personality may be created from him (Al-Eisawi, 1975).

3) Definition of Delinquency:

It is a set of actions performed by an individual that fall within what is considered unacceptable or contrary to the rules and laws of society.

Researchers also generally define delinquency as a set of actions whose perpetrators are punished by the authorities or competent bodies in society. (Osheikh, 2018)

Definitions of delinquency vary:

3-1 Delinquency in Psychology:

The psychoanalytic school views delinquency as the dominance of instinctive drives over social values, making them superior to the influence of the social environment and societal values.

Psychologists have agreed that delinquency is behavior that goes against the customs and laws of society.

3-2 Delinquency in Sociology:

Sociologists view delinquency as a set of actions performed by an individual as a result of exposure to certain pressures and factors. Researchers in this field note that delinquency occurs during a significant period in an individual's life, when growth and maturity have not yet fully developed. They consider it a common social phenomenon that all societies suffer from. They do not place blame on the delinquent nor do they support their punishment. Rather, they believe that the delinquent's behavior is due to psychological, biological, environmental, and social causes that are beyond their control.

3-3 Delinquency in Legal Sciences:

It is any type of behavior prohibited by law, regardless of the status of the behavior or the individual who committed it, without clarifying the reasons for the occurrence of this behavior or how to avoid or treat it.

Paul and Blewer state that, from a legal perspective, delinquency is any act or behavior that exposes an individual to legal accountability (Al-Otaibi, 2018).

4)- Factors Causing Juvenile Delinquency:

The causes of juvenile delinquency are numerous, including: personal, economic, social, and cultural.

❶ - Personal factors:

These include physical factors, which refer to the organic makeup and congenital characteristics, such as the shape and functions of organs. (Homer, 2010)

Psychological factors, which include frequent feelings of frustration, emotional deprivation, and a lack of psychological security.

Mental factors, related to diseases that may affect the human brain, disrupting the mental system and impairing mental faculties, leading to deviant and criminal acts. (Ismaili et al., 2017)

❷ - Social factors:

These include all the social circumstances in which a child grows up, in addition to factors related to peers and family.

A. Family:

The family plays an effective role in children's delinquency. Family disputes, family disintegration, the absence or delinquency of one parent, excessive pampering, cruelty, and deprivation greatly influence adolescents' self-perceptions. This manifests itself in delinquency and the practice of acts that are rejected by society and prohibited by law. (Al-Mutairi, 2013)

B. School:

School is considered a space for disseminating knowledge, but it is also a complex fabric of relationships. A child may learn more about social norms in the form of systems. However, the school may fail to perform its duties due to the mistreatment and neglect of the child by its administration and teachers, leading to frustration and a desire to disengage from the educational system. The administration and teachers are not always the cause of juvenile delinquency within schools; there are other causes related to the juveniles themselves, such as poor academic achievement, persistent failure, and an inability to succeed in school. This causes the child to lose self-confidence and the desire to continue studying, which exposes them to delinquency. Therefore, dropping out of school is considered one of the manifestations of delinquency. (Al-Mutairi, 2013)

C. Peer Group:

Peer groups are a significant factor influencing juvenile delinquency. If the group contains individuals prone to deviant and aggressive behavior, children are likely to be influenced and adopt these behaviors in turn.

Peer groups consist of young people who seek respite from family neglect, poverty, and excessive family cruelty. For them, the group represents a source of strength and immunity, as children copy the behaviors of their group members and derive their beliefs and values from them to a large extent through interaction. Children are unable to differentiate between normal and deviant individuals and fall prey to bad company, especially in the absence of supervision.

Peer groups also serve as a link between those who are new to delinquency and those who are professional criminals. (Ghani, 2019)

③- Cultural Factors:

Media: This refers to all means of communication and the transmission of information, ideas, opinions, news, etc.

The media can play a role in juvenile delinquency by exaggerating the portrayal of violence and crime, which encourages individuals to engage in similar acts.

Various media outlets can also influence children's socialization. Numerous studies have demonstrated a relationship between criminal behavior and the media. (Salem et al., 2015)

③- Economic factors:

Economic factors significantly influence children's behavior and delinquency. Delinquency is more prevalent among adolescents from poor families. This does not mean that delinquency does not occur among the middle and upper classes. However, the rate of delinquency is higher among the poorer classes.

Therefore, addressing the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency requires addressing and improving economic factors, while attempting to provide job opportunities, improve the financial conditions of individuals and families, and reduce social class and social discrimination. (Ismaili et al., 2017)

5)- Theories Explaining Juvenile Delinquency:

The following are the most important theories explaining juvenile delinquency:

1. The Biological Theory:

Cesar Lombroso is considered the author of this theory, which is considered one of the most important theories in explaining deviant criminal behavior. He arrived at conclusions indicating that delinquency and crime result from brain and neurological abnormalities, leading to a clear imbalance in the relationship between the functions of will and moral values in the brain. There are also physical characteristics that distinguish criminals and delinquents from other normal individuals. (Al-Mutairi, 2013).

2. The Integrative Theory:

This theory focuses on the interplay and interaction of physical, psychological, social, economic, cultural, and other factors in its explanation of delinquency. Delinquency results from multiple factors, not just one factor; they combine and interact with each other.

Behavior must also be understood in light of the past, taking into account the present that triggered this behavior. (Al-Mutairi, 2013)

3. The Differential Socialization Theory:

Stiland considered social disintegration to be the primary cause of criminal behavior. He also emphasized that crime is essentially a learned phenomenon.

He also identified several principles of his theory, including that criminal behavior is learned behavior. It is learned through interaction with other people.

Stiland states that an individual is drawn to crime if the tendencies that drive criminality overpower the factors that inhibit it. This occurs when an individual constantly interacts with criminals. (Akers and Bellers, 2013)

4. Psychoanalytic Theory:

The psychoanalytic school focuses on the role of the unconscious in determining an individual's behavior. Proponents of this theory believe that behavior reflects a person's experiences, including their needs and failures.

They explain crime by understanding the hidden desires that underlie every prohibition. They also link guilt to the commission of a crime. (Ghani, 2019)

5. Stigma Theory:

This theory focuses on the impact of societal reactions to crime or delinquent behavior. It views these reactions as inherently a cause of crime formation or recurrence. This is due to society's stigmatization of deviants, which has profound psychological effects and leads them to repeat deviant behavior. (Al-Ajami, 2005)

Frank Tannenbaum is considered a pioneer of this theory, advocating several ideas that can be summarized as follows:

- He believes that criminals are essentially no different from non-criminals.
- There is a direct exaggeration and hyperbole of evil.
- Deviance is a conflict between society and the group in general.
- The actions and behaviors of some people are emphasized, while the behaviors of others are ignored. (Haj Allah, 2022)

6. General Heredity Theory:

This theory focuses on the extent to which genetic factors influence criminal behavior. There is a division among scholars regarding the heritability of crime itself or the tendency toward it.

Proponents of this theory link genetic factors to criminal behavior, considering genetic factors as motivators of criminal behavior.

It also suggests that crime results from an interaction between genetic and environmental factors, with genetic abnormalities affecting behavior.

7. The Economic Theory:

Proponents of this theory link delinquency to difficult economic conditions, as poverty and unemployment lead to deprivation and generate serious feelings of revenge, resulting in deviant behavior. They also consider the economic organization of society responsible for delinquency and deviance.

Experts, however, believe that poor economic conditions lead to deviance due to deprivation of physical needs, poor housing conditions, family disintegration, and the inability to keep up with the community.

8. The Social Theory:

This theory explains delinquency through the social environment, which leads to the formation of criminal tendencies. It focuses on studying social relations and their impact on social organization and societal culture.

The latter consists of diverse human groups that differ from one another based on the number of members, the degree of solidarity among them, and the nature of the goals and interests that unite them.

This diversity leads to a clash between the behavioral norms of each group. Conflict can arise between the general cultural norms of society and the behavioral norms of a particular group, which in some cases leads to deviant criminal behavior. (Ghani, 2019)

9. Learning Theory:

Proponents of this theory believe that parenting and socialization methods play an important role in individuals learning behavioral methods that enable them to achieve their goals.

Among the most prominent researchers in this field is Albert Bandura, who believes that most aggressive behaviors are learned through observation and imitation. Children learn aggressive behavior by observing models and examples of aggressive behavior presented by family members, friends, and adults in the child's environment.

There are three sources of observational learning for children: family, peers, and symbolic models such as television. (Abu Qura, 1996)

Conclusion:

The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is one of the most significant social phenomena that disrupts the overall social order and threatens the security and stability of society. Juvenile delinquency, as a social phenomenon, has a criminal dimension. It is also considered a relative concept that defines society on psychological, social, and legal grounds.

This phenomenon may be due to several factors, including personal, psychological, economic, social, cultural, and others.

The peer group is the second most influential social institution after the family in influencing a child's behavior, either positively or negatively. Most juvenile delinquents are influenced by their friends, adopting many behaviors that are inconsistent with the society in which they live.

Also, most juvenile delinquents have juvenile delinquent friends, and the juvenile delinquent relies on the acceptance of other juvenile delinquents.

Therefore, it has become necessary to address this phenomenon and confront it using various methods by identifying its causes, limiting its progression, and preventing its spread.

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