

# FAMILY INFLUENCE IN THE PHENOMENON OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

**Mihaela Luminița SANDU, PhD Lecturer**

Department of Psychology and Social Work

Ovidius University of Constanța

[mihaela\\_naidin@gmail.com](mailto:mihaela_naidin@gmail.com)

**Kristive Viorica ISPAS, Psychologist**

Individual Cabinet of Psychology

[ispas\\_kristine@yahoo.com](mailto:ispas_kristine@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *Juvenile delinquency is a social pathological behaviour in which a child commits crime; it is a social disease which creates social disorganization in the society. Each one of us have heard about a crime committed by children, and this juvenile delinquency can be seen from social and legal points of view. From the social viewpoints, disrespect shown by a child towards norms, values, customs and traditions of society can be called juvenile delinquency. But from the legal viewpoint, breaking of laws established by state by a child is called juvenile delinquents. We all know that no child is delinquent by birth, but the behaviour of society makes him delinquent. III- treatment by parents or community members and even misbehaviour of class mates and teachers makes a child delinquent. Studies of the family took as its starting point the observation that, in general, children tend to resemble their parents in terms of appearance, behaviour and mentality, even the transmission of hereditary traits or characteristics involves physical, mental, from parents to children.*

**Key words:** *delinquency, juvenile, pathological behaviour, society, organizations.*

## 1. Introduction

The necessity of approaching juvenile delinquency in in the following is based on the fact that juvenile delinquency is a social problem of topicality, facing the Romanian society, and violence among young people is an indicator of the status of the social system in a state and a preacher for its becoming.

While family studies have as a starting point the observation that children generally tend to resemble their parents in terms of weight, behaviour, and mentality; heredity presupposes even the transmission of physical or mental attributes from parents to children. There are opinions that support the hypothesis that criminal tendencies are inherited almost in the same way as common physical traits and characteristics, yet the mere existence of criminal ascendants or descendants is not a definite proof of the heredity of crime, this

may be the favoured factor, while the individual's environment is the determining factor.

One of the most important functions of the family is the education and training of young people for the purpose of their optimal integration into life and social activity. Within the family group, parents directly or indirectly, exert educational and formative influences on their own children, and the marital couple through their entire behavioural system constitutes a genuine social model that has a decisive influence on children about their conception of life, behave and relate to different norms and social values.

The importance of the minor's relationship with the family should not be minimized, since at the beginning of his existence the only contact with the outside is the one with the family. The presence of child's mother during this period is irreplaceable, and between the mother and the child there must be a relationship of affection from the beginning, so that it will not be able to withstand later psychological deficiencies. In the first year of life, the child begins to build his personality according to his character and external influences, which for the moment come from his family, this being also the reason why mother must have an affectionate but firm attitude.

## **2. The typology of juvenile delinquency**

A first set of criteria (Banciu, Rădulescu, 2002: 262-264) according to which a typology of juvenile delinquency behaviours can be made, includes: the age and the personality, the type of offense committed, the social environment in which they have grown and the real possibilities of social recovery and reintegration. Thus, three taxonomic types of juvenile delinquency can be identified:

**Occasional, accidental and unstructured delinquency.** Minors in this category commit crimes with a low degree of social danger. As a rule, this category comes from legally constituted families but with social deficiencies, either in the sense of an excess of socialization or in the sense of too low a socialization, this being the reason why minors flee home and school, coming under the influence of some unfavourable groups, in which they begin to commit deviant and delinquent acts. For many of these minors, their deviant behaviour is the form of manifestation of the "crisis" of adolescent originality, by participating in committing offenses accidentally or occasionally, out of terrible, bravado or spirit of solidarity towards the group.

**Structured delinquency.** This category includes minors committing crimes with a high degree of social dangers. They usually come from structurally and functionally disorganized families (one-parent families by divorce or separation in fact or in concubines, where there are no minimum rules of communication, affectivity and mutual support) with a poor economic

situation, having, at the same time, low school and professional performance. It is remarkable at an early age to commit acts of ill-treatment (home thefts, neighbours, classmates, smoking, home and/or school dropouts, alcohol and even drugs, physical violence, etc.).

**Recurrent or repetitive delinquency.** In this category we find minors who commit criminal offenses with a special social danger, such as murder, rape, robbery, corporal injury, drug consumption and trafficking etc. As a rule, these minors come from negative, marginal or even pathogenic social environments, where they are socialized and taught in a contentious, aggressive, violent spirit, and where they acquire, at an early age, attitudes, techniques and delinquent and criminal options. Many times, the perpetrators of such offenses are organized into “gangs” and antisocial groups, specializing in committing spectacular offenses, both, ingenuity and way of realization, as well as procedures for organizing and capitalizing on the results (products and consequences) of their torts.

### **3. Family, factor involved in the appearance of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon**

The family, which should represent the basic cell of the society, which should provide the child with safety, warmth, love, understanding necessary for its normal development - its socialization by printing a certain value standard, as well as acceptance or rejection attitudes towards certain social values, the contemporary family has diminished its size and role, marriage being replaced by concubinage, in present the age for marriage gradually increasing to 40 years.

Family factors that engage in aggressive behaviour are primarily represented by parental behaviour, namely miss of maternal affection associated with either the lack of paternal behaviour pattern or the abuse of authority of him. To these, it adds the influences of the family environment, conflicts between family members, the lack of affectivity between them, generating violent behaviour. An unbalanced family environment, with lack of affection, especially from the mother, will cause childhood adaptation and communication disorders in the social environment, which may take the form of depression, autism, aggression.

#### *The relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency*

Criminological research studies the relationship between family structure, education received by the minor within the family, and the phenomenon of delinquency. This factor is relative, studying in relation to the habits, the role played by the family as a social group in each society, knowing that the number of family members is important for child development, as long

as he comes in contact with different human typologies with which it is bound to communicate.

Some criminologists consider the single child in family is less prone to delinquency than the children with a large number of siblings, the reason being determined by the decline of authority in families with many children, and in the literature of sociology of deviance it is registered that the negative role is played by the socialization process in families only with one child.

Indeed, there are other points of view that do not emphasize what the role of influence of number of children on juvenile delinquency, but refers only at the material difficulties that family with many children has to face, which can lead to delinquency, but they are part of another criminal factor.

#### **4. Types of family and juvenile delinquency**

##### **4. 1. The disorganized family**

Adolescent socialization begins in the family and develops according to the relationships she has with her members (Pescaru Maria, 2008: 94).

The disorganized family is the family that loses its integrity as a result of parental separation due to reasons such as divorce, death, parental detention or lack of real spousal communication. The study of juvenile delinquency (Hollin, 1992: 93) has shown that, to a great extent, the atmosphere of disorganized families, lack of parental authority, lack of parental affections have led the children to adopt anti-social attitudes, so the family structure is not guilty of the deviant behaviour of the child, but the deficiencies of each disorganized family.

In connection with the dismantling of the original family, the question is raised about the step parents, the spouse of the parent to whom the child has grown, a situation which, although influencing the occurrence of juvenile delinquency, cannot be accurately stated that the delinquency is generated by the mere presence of the step parent, or the rejection that the child feels against the stepfather, or if deviant behaviour is intended to attract attention.

##### **4. 2. The family in conflict**

There are some families that are characterized by more conflicting states, states that can be of varying intensity and can extend over different periods of time, starting from relatively simple forms - quarrels, misunderstandings, contradictions, refusal of family obligations - to complex forms - mental and physical aggression, home chasing, family abandonment.

The pathogenic conjugal conflict is characterized by the destructive penetration inside the spouses's personality, disorganizing the family and hindering the realization of its natural functions, in which case children receive and live intensively every event in their family.

The main effect of conflicting relationships within the family being the devaluation of the parental model and the loss of possibility with identification with this model, and most of the time children who feel strongly the influences of the conflicting climate, run away from home and seek to find a group of belonging, a group that in some cases may be antisocial.

The lack of affective and emotional climate in the damaged families, the lack of communication, the deficiencies in the educational style, the lack of control of the minor by the parents are factors that can negatively influence the behaviour of the minor who can commit deviant and criminal acts. (Pescaru Maria, 2008: 95)

#### **4.3. Hiper-authoritarian family climate**

Excessive severity, with many rigidities, brutal bans, threatening firm orders, leaves a strong footprint on the child personality, and keeping the child in a hipersever climate leads to a gradually decreases in attitude-relational dimension, in minor's personality, translated in time into apathetic states, attitudes of rebellion, protest, the young man gradually turning from the victim to the aggressor. Statistics highlight the role of a hyperspectral attitude in juvenile delinquency and, in general, the child does not respond direct to the father's brutality, but in his behaviour towards those around him.

According to statistics, about 80% of juvenile delinquents come from a strict or chaotic environment; in this sense L. Berkowitz affirming that "a child who feels frustrated with paternal love, feels rejected by his father, learns aggressive education, the object of his aggression being all the holders of authority".

#### **4. 4. The hyperpermissive family**

If hyper-authoritarianism represents an exaggeration of the exercise of the parental role in the direction of total imposition of the parents' will, hyperpermissiveness creates exaggerated conditions for its defence against possible dangers. Parents submits great efforts to protect the child, even in an exaggerated manner, and one of the immediate consequences of exercising a superprotective attitude is the detachment between self-image and the real possibilities of children, which leads to the appearance exacerbation of the self, child overestimating his own possibilities, resulting in the end in the child's tendency to impose its dominant power in the face of others.

Children rose without rules, constraints, having them both parents available, it will then bear frustrations or disciplinary framework latter on, statistics revealing the existence of a large percentage of offenders who come from families protective and at the same time permissive.

Concluding, the criminal behaviour has both, internal factors- related to the psychology of the offender, and external factors- which tend to inadequate

the juridical and moral system of society; yet the most important element that intervenes in the emergence and development of crime is represented by the training environment of the child, personality of the individual, especially the aggressive personality.

In family, the child's tendency to imitate the behaviour of its members becomes strong and frequent, and the existence of delinquent or immoral parents will exert a direct criminogenic influence on the child. (Pescaru Maria, 2008: 94)

## **5. Case study**

In order to emphasize the influence of the family on juvenile delinquency and inappropriate behaviour of the child, we conducted a case study.

High school student M.I., in the 12th grade, from a prestigious high school in Constanta city, has a lack of adaptation and school and social integration, reflected in the low level of school performance as well as an identity crisis. She was often surprised to be scolding the examinations and stealing the things of her colleagues, which was why her note was reduced to being the first to be sanctioned, because subsequently the fraud of the tests repeatedly led to the repetition of the school year.

### **Objectives:**

- a) determination of causes;
- b) removal of causes;
- c) propose an educational intervention project.

### **Steps.** Approach the case

A. Presentation of the case - current situation: learning problems; Identity crisis; Conflictualist relationships with classmates.

B. Procurement and systematization of information

1. Analysis of school activity: low grades in most disciplines; the student does not fulfil his school duties; does not actively participate in classes and very often is much unmotivated.

The disciplines of interest are Romanian language and literature, theatre, music, violin; those with total disinterest are at: physical, chemistry, mathematics.

2. Psycho-pedagogical observations - intelligence is appropriate to age; Thinking - is appropriate to age; Presents a written and oral language rich in meaning; Memory - generally mechanical memory and short-term; Imagination is generally reproductive. As far as attention is concerned, the pupil has a low concentration and slightly cheers; this teen age student avoid making major decisions, is indecisive, has no patience, is easily influenced by others. The motivation is extrinsic;

3. Verbal, sensory, and motivational skills are normal, age-appropriate; thinking and perceptual skills - are a little under the possibilities; Affectivity - presents major affective imbalances, oscillates between positive and negative affective dispositions in very short periods of time.

- in order to receive benefit from colleagues' compassion, or sometimes as a form of defence in order to protect her own person, she resorts to the most strange lies.

4. Medical problems. The student has a normal psychosomatic development for her age but has also conditions that require special attention;

- Renal diseases requiring several weeks of hospitalization;

- Dental conditions due to a major calcium deficiency that is aggravated by kidney medication.

- Excessive preoccupation with silhouette (43 kg at 1.70 m) caused a gastritis that evolves towards the ulcer without a rational diet.

5. Social relations. Within the family, relationships were particularly tense between parents; a particularly aggressive father with all family members, especially with his wife, very authoritarian, with a predominantly choleric temperament, he does not make any kind of income over one year and without wish to get a job, living from wife's income. He is concerned only with his own person and with the many extramarital relationships, and his role in raising and educating M.I and the other two brothers was almost nonexistent.

Within the family, mother does everything in the family, starting with financial security, growing and educating children, she is emotionally overwhelmed, overwhelmed by the multitude of tasks and stressors she face, and, because of personal problems, the children's problems have passed on the second plan.

- M.I. has two younger brothers, one 16 years old and one 12 year old, with whom she is in cordial relationships. The youngest one has grown and occupies a special place in her affective life.

- Friends group - has very few friends

- Class colleagues-M.I has strained relationships with classmates.

### **5.1. History of the problem evolution**

1. History of the problem. Problems occurred when high school began and worsened at the end of the X-th grade when, due to lack of interest in school, medical problems, high absenteeism, student repeats one year in school . In the new class, to excite the compassion of her colleagues, she begins to lie about her family's, saying that she has "no mother, I am raised by the stepmother", "only father takes care of her".

2. The history of school evolution - no special problems until the 9th grade when she was caught by stealing a college's cosmetics bag, then cheating an

exam arguing that the lack of time for teaching is due to medical reasons, which is only partly true, but it also has a contribution lack of interest for school;

3. History of intellectual development - normal intellectual development, corresponding to age

4. History of physical development - psychosomatic development about age, but an always sickness, suddenly aggravated in the X class, due to kidney trouble;

5. Family history - in the family, there have always been conflicting relationships, a tense atmosphere hard to bear, mother being the one who decides all the time without taking into account the aspirations of the children. Mother's wish was to become a doctor, and start forced her bigger daughter to follow this path, towards which the student does not feel any attraction.

6. History of social relationships. The teen moved to the beginning of the 9th grade from Timisoara to Constanta, breaking the relationship with the former group of friends. She had and has a small circle of friends, not always properly chosen.

## **5.2. Discovering causes**

Family conflicts, tensions in parenting relationships, undermine the need for protection and safety of M.I., and this overlapping over her youth's asthenic structure, over the frequent moments when she was caught stealing from her colleagues and the tendency to fraud during school tests, all this predispose M.I. to school failure.

## **5.3. Configuring the situation**

Following discussions with M.I. and with her mother, I have found that her greatest dream is to pursue a career in the theatrical field, to which she has real inclinations. Also, the young girl would like to continue studying the piano.

Thus, for the near future, the young girl has proposed not to take anymore absences, to not steal the school tests anymore, to study even more the disciplines in which she has problems, possibly asking for help from colleagues, to solve the problems with parents and classmates, all for the future preparation and success of the admission exam at the Academy of Theater and Film.

For the more distant future, student wants to receive a scholarship to study abroad, to succeed in all areas of life, starting a family life, and own a house and a well-paid job.

## **5.4. Elaboration of action strategies**

Strategies of action acted on a personal level by: increasing self-confidence; stimulating motivation for learning; changing student's attitude towards learning; changing student's attitudes towards colleagues and their

relationships; psychotherapy sessions; changing the system of values of the young girl.

The strategies of action works at the level off class facilitating group integration; requesting from student to carry out group activities by participating in extra-curricular activities: excursions, entertainment programs, so they act at the level of all factors: parents, teachers, colleagues, and entourage.

### **5.5. Taking and supporting the judgment.**

#### **Initiating an educational intervention project**

It is envisaged the elaboration of an intervention educational project, as well as the formulation of prognoses regarding the later evolution of M.I., and the educational intervention project has a common school-family action plan. The aim of this educational intervention project is to intensify the school's collaboration with the family, in order to solve tense family situations, to motivate young people for learning, to abandon the fraudulent examinations and trials, and M.I. to be able to overcome the identity crisis.

The objectives of the educational project are:

- parents' awareness of their responsibilities in educating their children, of the need to treat each child differently according to age specificity;
- parents' awareness of the fact that the young person has to decide for themselves to choose their profession, a decision that parents must take into account.
- changing parents' behavioural attitudes towards their children, for greater openness to them, stimulating positive thinking, finding non-aggressive approaches to addressing and resolving crisis situations.
- mutual knowledge of parents-educators, for the realization of a real school-family cooperation:
- motivating parents to solve conflicts;
- changing the attitude of the student towards solving the school tasks
- adequate stimulation of the pupil for learning,
- achieving a balanced work program without over-stressing or jumping efforts, with tasks assigned to the possibilities of the young, reinforcing success and diminishing the failure,
- developing self-confidence, developing and improving the young person's self-image,
- promoting group integration by joint action with colleagues,
- orientation towards the psychotherapy session to solve emotional and emotional problems as well as the identity crisis.

## 5.6. Predicting the future evolution of puppies

### **Pedagogical status**

- Intensifying interest in learning,
- Promoting the bacculaureate exam,
- Promoting the college exam.

### Intellectual state:

- to increase resistance to intellectual effort.
- to optimize attention concentration.

### **Health status:**

- It will develop normally.

### **Prognosis of personality development**

- developing self-confidence,
- resolving the identity crisis,
- growing self-esteem.

### **Social Relations**

- to have a positive relationship with colleagues, to integrate into collectively
- to be accepted collectively for teamwork

### **Family relationships**

- to ease and improve relationships between parents,
- to change the relationship with both parents, who will give up the authoritarian behaviour in favour of a firm but flexible attitude, and they will learn the best ways to approach and manage the crisis situations.

## 6. Conclusions

When the emotional deficiencies and conflicts in the family environment, family relations disorders, when inequalities attitudes manifested by both parents to the child exceed certain limits of intensity and duration, transforming into real traumatizing situations for the adolescent, his personality in formation will register on the wrong paths. The repulsive manifestations of the minor prove, in most cases, the fact that in the past they had brutal coercive means, severe conflict situations or humiliating punishments, from which we can conclude that the family climate plays an important role in explaining the antisocial behaviour of young people, when the child does not respond directly to the aggressor parent, but indirectly through attitudes and even aggressive and self-aggressive actions.

At the opposite, is the hyperpermissive familial climate in which parents are superprotective, simply invading the child with affective investment, and this behaviour towards the child can lead to the appearance of anti-social factors, events, that are mostly explained by low resistance to frustration.

Thus, we can say that the role of the family in the development of the personality of minors is very important, the juvenile delinquency being determined by the influence of the family. Although the influence of the family is only a percentage of the total criminality of minors, it still minimizes the direct and indirect influence that the family has on juvenile delinquency by catalysing other factors - personality, a deficient material situation, which would be a regrettable mistake with effects over time.

#### References:

1. BANCIU, D., Rădulescu, M.S. (2002). *Evoluții ale delincvenței juvenile în România. Cercetare și prevenire socială*, Bucharest, Lumina Lex.
2. BOTEZATU, O. (1992). *Criminalitatea în societatea de tranziție. Studii de drept românesc*, no. 4, Bucharest.
3. HOLLIN, Clive R. (1992). *Psychology and Crime: An Introduction Criminological Psychology*, Routledge, New York.
4. IACOVISAC, C. (1973). *Mediul familial și delincvența juvenilă*, Bucharest.
5. PESCARU, M., (2008), *Fenomenul delincvenței juvenile în România*, Beladi, Craiova.
6. PREDA, V. (1998). *Delincvența juvenilă*, Cluj-Napoca.
7. SINTION, F., Calin, M.F. (2012). *Metodologia cercetării în psihologie*, Constanța, Ovidius University Press.