


Chapter 16

Juvenile Delinquency: Risk Factors and Prevention Techniques

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency is considered as the act of engaging in any illegal behavior by a person under the legal age of majority. Individual characteristics, family, school, peer groups and society play a crucial role in the adoption of delinquent behavior by a minor. Some protective factors that limit criminal behavior of children and adolescents are the ability of the minor to both self-regulate their emotions and comprehend the consequences of their acts, a supportive family, an efficient parental supervision, commitment in school, and the development of friendships focused on values such as solidarity or empathy. Society plays a crucial role in the moulding of a minor's behavior. The policies/measures that can be taken have to be compatible with a number of dispositions on both national and international level. The proposed chapter seeks to both present the risk factors of juvenile delinquency

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and suggest techniques for the prevention and repression of criminality in minors.

INTRODUCTION

It is evident that children can commit crimes. As a matter of fact, juvenile delinquency can be categorized as the situation “when a kid acts like a grown-up” (Singh & Goyat, 2020), referring to violations of criminal law committed by minors (Brezina & Agnew, 2015). Delinquency can be described as a kind of abnormality or as a deviation from the course of normal social life (Venktachalam & Aravidan, 2014). According to greek law, an offender is considered “juvenile” when his age is between twelve and eighteen years old (article 121 par. 1 of the Greek Criminal Code-Law n. 4619/2019). Juvenile offenders are either subjected to reformative and therapeutic measures or confined in special juvenile detention facilities (article 121 par. 2 of the greek Criminal Code).

Behaviors that can be characterized as juvenile delinquency include crimes related to drugs, property crimes or white collar as well as violent crimes. Juvenile delinquency can be categorized into four major groups (Venktachalam & Aravidan, 2014): (a) Individual delinquency. In this case, a minor may commit crimes by its own and without the help of another person. This type of criminal behavior occurs from existing psychological issues that prevent the minor offender from complying with the rules set by society. It is evident that children consider their parents or caregivers as “role models”. Hence any potential aggressive behavior by a parent or caregiver may affect child’s development and behavior. A potential lack of support from the family may as well cause the child to develop an antisocial behavior. Poverty, insufficient education, use of drugs, alcohol abuse and any potential criminal background of a parent or caregiver are considered as the main risk factors that lead a child to adopt a criminal behavior. (b) Group-supported criminality is considered as the criminal behavior that a child adopts by being a member of a group that resembles a gang. Each group adopts its own unique style. Minors that form part of this team also adopt their gang’s behavior in their personal life. Nevertheless, an adolescent is prone to a delinquent behavior because of its lack of intellectual maturity. As a matter of fact, any minor is eager to participate in any delinquent act in order to be accepted by its peers. When a minor starts to follow the criminal way of living and behavior, that some of its peers follow, setting aside its parents’ or caregivers’ advices, its behavior cannot be easily controlled. Inequalities that exist in the contemporary society force a person to become member of delinquent subgroups in order to achieve its goals. (c) Organized criminality. This type of delinquent behavior occurs when a minor is part of a group that resembles a criminal organization, hence having a certain hierarchical structure as well as a continuous activity. (d) Situational criminality.

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