JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AS A RESULT OF BROKEN HOMES

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ABSTRACT

Family is a premier social institution across the world for innumerable purpose and one among them is nurturing the children. The child has to learns culture, social values, customs, traditions, etc., through the socialization processes from the families. The family supposed to consist of love, care and affection which abundantly prevail can help the children to understand the entire world. The home environment can only be indirect causes of delinquency. They react upon the child's mind and body changing his mental and physical condition which in their turn determines his behavior. The conditions in the home and the family relationships which influence more particularly the mental life of the child are perhaps even more important as causes of delinquency than factors which affect mostly the physical condition of the child. In this line of thinking the paper throws its very light on what are the role played by the family in creating the juvenile delinquents and the needed strategies right now.

KEYWORDS: Juvenile Delinquency, Broken Home, Parental Supervision, Family Characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Family is the foundation of human society. Children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflict, or who are inadequately supervised are at the greatest risk of becoming delinquent. Families are one of the strongest socializing forces in life. They teach children to control unacceptable behavior, to delay gratification, and to respect the rights of others. On the other hand, families can teach children aggressive, antisocial, and violent behavior (Wright & Wright 1994). The cohesiveness of the family successfully predicted the frequency of delinquent acts of non-traditional families (Matherne & Thomas 2001). Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1998) found that parental conflict and parental aggressiveness predicted violent offending; whereas, lack of maternal affection and paternal criminality predicted involvement in property crimes. Familial characteristics suggesting familial antisocial behavior or values such as family history of criminal behavior, harsh parental discipline, and family conflict have been among the most consistently linked.
For family disruption and delinquency, the composition of families is one aspect of family life that is consistently associated with delinquency. Children who live in homes with only one parent or in which marital relationships have been disrupted by divorce or separation are more likely to display a range of behavioral problems, including delinquency, than children who are from two parent families (Thornberry, et al. 1999). Family behaviors, particularly parental monitoring and disciplining, seem to influence the association with deviant peers throughout the adolescent period (Cashwell & Vacc 1994).

Who is Juvenile?
A juvenile is a person who is under the age of 18. The age limit below which it should not be permitted to deprive a child of his or her liberty should be determined by law. A juvenile can be defined as a child who has not attained a certain age at which he, like an adult person under the law of the land, can be held liable for his criminal acts. The juvenile is a child who is alleged to have committed /violated some law which declares the act or omission on the part of the child as an offence. Juvenile and minor in legal terms are used in different contexts. Juvenile is used when reference is made to a young criminal offenders and minor relates to legal capacity or majority.10 To make the meaning more clear resort can profitably be made to some other source. The concept of the juvenile varies from State of State for convenience.

What is Juvenile Delinquency?
Delinquency is a kind of abnormality. When an individual deviates from the course of normal social life, his behavior is called 'Delinquent'. When a juvenile, below an age specified under a statute exhibits behavior which may prove to be dangerous to society and/or for him, he may be called a Juvenile delinquent. Juvenile delinquents are those offenders, including boys and girls who are under 18 years of age. A Juvenile delinquent is a young person incorrigible or habitually disobedient.

Identifying Characteristics of Juvenile Delinquents
I. The Basic Problem of The Juvenile Delinquent Is Irresponsibility --- No Accountability --- "It's Not My Fault".
   1. A young child's natural inclination is to blame others --- "Now See What You Made Me Do."
2. This kind of blaming, which may include faulting inanimate objects, continues until the Age of Seven.

3. At the Age of Eight, the child is more inclined to Assume Responsibility for his behavior and suffer the consequences.

4. However, the Anti-social Youth has almost Unlimited Excuses --- they present themselves as Victims --- and often sound Convincing.

5. The fights are the results of unavoidable Squabbles and Overreaction.

6. Vandalism is regarded as Childish Pranks.

Types of Juvenile Delinquency
Howard Becker (1966: 226-38) has referred to four types of delinquencies: (a) individual delinquency, (b) group-supported delinquency, (c) organized delinquency, and (d) situational delinquency.

(a) Individual delinquency:
This refers to delinquency in which only one individual is involved in committing a delinquent act and its cause is located within the individual delinquent. Most of the explanations of this delinquent behavior come from psychiatrists. Their argument is that delinquency is caused by psychological problems stemming primarily from defective/faulty/pathological family interaction patterns. They indulged in delinquency as a solution to these problems, as it (delinquency) either brought attention from parents or provided support from peers or reduced their guilt feelings. Later studies also identified important aspects of family relations leading to delinquencies. Thus, father-son rather than mother-son relations seemed more essential in delinquency, as delinquent boys could not internalize moral values because of the absence of good role models in their fathers. In addition, their discipline was also more harsh and stern.

(b) Group-supported delinquency:
In this type, delinquencies are committed in companionship with others and the cause is located not in the personality of the individual or in the delinquent's family but in the culture of the individual's home and neighborhood. The youngest became delinquent was their association and companionship with others already delinquent. This was later put very clearly by Sutherland, who developed the theory of differential association.
(c) Organized delinquency:
This type refers to delinquencies that are committed by formally organized groups. These delinquencies were analyzed in the United States in the 1950s and the concept of 'delinquent subculture' was developed. This concept refers to the set of values and norms that guide the behavior of group members encourage the commission of delinquencies, award status on the basis of such acts and specify typical relationships to persons who fall outside the groupings governed by group norms.

(d) Situational delinquency:
Situational delinquency provides a different perception. Here the assumption is that delinquency is not deeply rooted, and motives for delinquency and means for controlling it are often relatively simple. A young man indulges in a delinquent act without having a deep commitment to delinquency because of less developed impulse-control and/or because of the weaker reinforcement of family restaurants, and because he has relatively little to lose even if caught.

Family Environment and Juvenile Delinquency
Large numbers of the studies have shown the majority of juvenile offenders come from families living in poverty, the highest percent being people of color or minority groups. Two specific aspects of the family environment and structure seem to recur in the literature on delinquency. These may best be characterized as family type and family status. Family type refers to the way the family interacts with one another, that is, levels of adaptability, cohesiveness, and communication between family members.

Cohesion refers to the emotional attachment or bond among family members. There are four levels of the cohesive element: disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed. Families that are disengaged lack loyalty or closeness and are characterized by high levels of independence. On the other end of the scale is the enmeshed element, which is characterized by very high levels of closeness and dependency. Family status refers to the composition of the family. Studies have shown that children from single parent and reconstituted families are more prone to problems than are children from traditional families.

Family related risk factors include a family history of problem behavior, family conflict, and inadequate problem solving skills. Studies have shown that children of physically abusive parents are more likely to grow into abusive adults, coining the term,
"cycle of violence". Parents that participate in criminal behavior are more likely to produce children that commit criminal acts. Studies have also shown that a child's delinquent behavior has been associated with the arrest(s) of one or both of the parents.

Figure: Juvenile delinquency risk factors associated with the family characteristics

Risk Factors Associated With Family Characteristics
With the relationship between the family and juvenile delinquency, these risk factors must be interpreted with concern their negative effects are sometimes derived from other factors present in the family environment, and sometimes from a combination of several risk factors. Taken in isolation, they are less obviously linked to juvenile delinquency than risk factors related to family dynamic and functional.1

Wells and Rankin (1991) find that the association between broken families and juvenile delinquency is variable, depending on the situation: it is weak or non-existent with regard to serious offences (theft, violent behavior), somewhat stronger with regard to drug use
(particularly soft), and significant with regard to “problem behaviors,” such as running away, truancy and classroom discipline problems.²

One of the most expressive examples of the special nature of these risk factors is the deliberations around the effects of single parenthood in the manifestation of delinquent behavior in youth. Single parenthood is considered a risk factor because this family structure is often associated with a lack of supervision, a lack of free time spent with the children, financial susceptibility, a poorer neighborhood, and so on. In fact, because single parenthood can easily lead to financial insecurity and thus to a situation that is difficult and stressful for families, it represents a family characteristic associated with risks for juvenile delinquency.³

Farrington (1995; 2006) found that the circumstances in which the family breakdown occur and the post separation effects are the most important factors to consider when assessing the risk for juvenile delinquency. Generally, boys who stayed with their mother after a separation had the same rate of delinquency as boys from intact families with a low frequency of conflict, whereas boys who stayed with their father or other relatives had higher rates of delinquency.⁴

Broken Homes:
Healy, Burt, Leeper, and others have pointed out that this situation may be considered as a very important issue in delinquency. Healy reports 45 to 52 per cent, Lorenz 59 per cent, and Leeper 79 per cent of cases of delinquency where "Home disrupted during the childhood of the individual" occurs in the case-histories. British and American investigations disclose that nearly 50% of the delinquents come from broken homes. This shows the cultural differences between the Indian and the Western countries. Still, it can be said that broken homes and families, lack of parental affection and security, absence of a loving mother in the childhood or an affectionate mother substitute, lack of family ties, parental irresponsibility and a steep rate of divorce, desertion and separation are all contributory factors for delinquency. The home may be broken up by the death of one or both of the parents, or by prolonged illness or insanity, desertion or divorce. Interaction at home is a very important means for socializing the child. The mother plays a crucial role in this regard. If she divorces her husband or deserts him or dies, the growth of the child will be affected.
Such a child loses not only a mother’s love but also parental control and becomes an easy victim to the outside anti-societal influence. It cannot, nevertheless, be said that broken home, habitually leads to delinquent behavior on the part of the children.

**Parental Supervision and Delinquency**

According to the results of the Canadian version of the International Youth Survey, the incidence of delinquency was clearly higher among young people who said that they had used alcohol and drugs, and whose parents exercised little supervision. 56% of youth who said that their parents never knew who they were with demonstrated delinquent behaviors during the last 12 months, compared to 35% of youth whose parents did not always know, and 12% of youth whose parents always knew who they went out with. Youth who did not get along well with their parents showed higher levels of delinquency. More than a third of youth, who said they did not get along well with their father or their mother showed delinquent behavior during the last 12 months, compared to about 20% of those who said they got along well with their parents.

**Mistreatment during Childhood and Family Violence**

A numerical of studies has confirmed that very early exposure to physical and psychological violence is a strong predictor of physical violence towards the victim, particularly of subsequent violence against the victim’s own partner or children. Witnessing violence in the home is an important risk factor for aggressiveness and delinquency in young people. According to the results of National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), children aged 6 to 11 who have witnessed violence in the home were twice (2.2 times) as likely to behave aggressively as children who had never witnessed violence.

Mistreatment during childhood is also a risk factor for various problem behaviors. Studies comparing adolescents mistreated in childhood with those who were not, show that more of the former exhibit behavioral problems (running away, dropping out of school, early pregnancy), substance abuse problems, carry weapons, exhibit delinquent behavior, place themselves in intimidating situations and join gangs.

**Conclusion**

Family is not constituted by a number of people living together but their mutual intimate relationships. Absence of this intimacy results in the breaking up of a family, and it is in broken families that juvenile delinquents develop. These delinquent go through a lot of abuse which vary in nature as physical, sexual, or psychological or as a combination. The abuse has
a long lasting and insightful effect on a child’s life. Children require guidance and support. They do not know the procedure of life. It is for citizens like us to take their hand and show them the right way. The social workers and sociologist play an important role in eradicating social evils and thus they are need for stricter analysis on their qualification and professional capacity.

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