

# METHODS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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**Abstract :**During adolescence years, teenagers are more exposed and more susceptible to delinquency due to high levels of temptations, rebellious and affective instability. Being so exposed and vulnerable, in these situations of risk, the parents role in this can be overwhelming, followed by psycho-pedagogical counseling or educational counseling as a form of prevention in delinquent behavior and problem solving that students may face.

Starting from these considerations, the interest granted to the domain is justified by a large number of psychologists/psychiatrists, due to the fact that these deviations of human behavior have an antisocial feature which is concerned about delicacy. Therefore, delinquency and criminality involve tackling the issue of juvenile delinquency.

The main purpose of the present research in a school from Arad Country, was the in-depth knowledge of juvenile delinquency, in which the causes of this problem and the identification of the psychological interference could lead to the minimization of this phenomenon.

**Keywords:** juvenile delinquency, methods of psychological intervention

## **Theoretical foundation**

The delinquent is an individual with a surplus of past negative experiences. He feels constrained and threatened by the world in which he lives, without having anything to lose or a social defense state, he does not feel

disturbed if he is criticized or incarcerated. There is little emphasis on the opinions of the people around him, and self-motivation and self-esteem in this case is at very low values (Mitrofan, Zdrengea, Butoi, 1992).

The term "deviance" defines, in a very broad sense, the deviation or violation of social norms and rules. This notion of "deviation" is found in sociology and social psychology as well as in criminology.

It is very important to note that deviance is not a simple, present or absent property in certain behaviors, but is the product of a complex process that often involves society's reaction to those behaviors (Banciu, Rădulescu, 2002).

Ion Pitulescu (2000) defines deviance as "an individual or collective human behavior that violates one or more written or unwritten norms imposed by a system of social responses (sanctions) that protect the general values accepted by a relatively stable and lasting social group."

Deviance implies any human behavior or social action that is so completely different from all the conduct and actions of all other members of a social group (Rădulescu, 1998).

Delinquency is a particular case of deviance. It is considered that a delinquent behavior has the following types of features:

- has a series of negative consequences because it damages the interests of society;
- is the subject of prohibitions or constraints formulated by criminal law
- presents a deliberate intent, pursuing a destructive purpose;
- includes merging intent with guilty action;
- the deed is legally proved and sanctioned as such (Banciu, Radulescu, 2002).

Studies and research into juvenile delinquency have shown that the atmosphere of disorganized families, lack of parental authority, control, and their affection, as a result of divorce, have led the children to commit social and antisocial acts (Kim, Canger, Lorenz, Elder Jr, Parent 2001).

Therefore, divorce, which leads to family disorganization, can outline serious types of emotional and behavioral disorders that lead to social unsettling. However, other studies and researches have shown that although the disorganized family is an important cause of juvenile delinquency, it is not the only one to blame for the emergence of all deviant conduct but it has its great "shortcomings" (Mitrofan, et. al., 1992).

It is, however, true that a child who feels frustrated by paternal love, feels rejected by his father, or who is often ill-treated by him, will not only learn how to react aggressively, but the object of his aggression will be not only his father's, but all the owners of the authority (Preda, 1981).

The family's role in educating young people has been greatly spoken, and not so often, parents are considered to be the only ones responsible for their children's inadequate behavior.

The education the child receives within the family is very important and can really constitute a major cause of the younger antisocial future behaviors. Therefore, both insufficient supervision and over-care of the child may represent important educational shortcomings, errors of the parents, which can lead the children to "escape" from the guardianship of all of them, committing various types of crimes, either to survive, or to prove its independence (Neacșu, 2010).

A social factor contributing to child education is school. Often, teachers, for lack of pedagogical tact, refer strictly to school curriculum, not taking into account the particular features of each student.

The emergence of various types of deviant manifestations of pupils is also related to the existence of some educational dysfunctions of the school, due to the fact that it effectively dominates an insufficient knowledge of all socio-familial conditions and the unsupervised by pupils of the school problem. (O. Pop, 2002)

### **Methodology**

The delinquency research among adolescents has used a strategy that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods. The set of tools used for collecting information are:

a) The questionnaire, which followed:

- Characteristic features of teenagers in the urban versus rural environment
- Forms of manifestation of delinquent behavior among minors;
- Causes that lead to deviant behavior
- The level of society involvement in the prevention of juvenile delinquency;
- The student's support for the delinquent manifestations of his life.

b) Observation;

c) Case study.

The subject of the research was made up of 16- to 18-year-old teenagers, Gheorghe Lazar high school in Pecica and "Sava Brancovici" high school in Gurahonț.

Case studies have involved students, teachers, and school psychologists.

The questionnaire was applied to 80 pupils in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades of "Gheorghe Lazăr" high school in Pecica (urban area) and "Sava Brancovici" high school in Gurahonț (rural area)

## Results and discussion

The results of the investigation came from pupils completed questionnaires as well as case studies of teenagers with various behavioral problems, problems encountered by teachers, schoolmasters or school counselors.

I have chosen to enumerate only a few of the features outlined by students, while making a parallel between those in the rural and urban areas. The answers are from the most common to the most shocking, which could trigger an alarm signal.

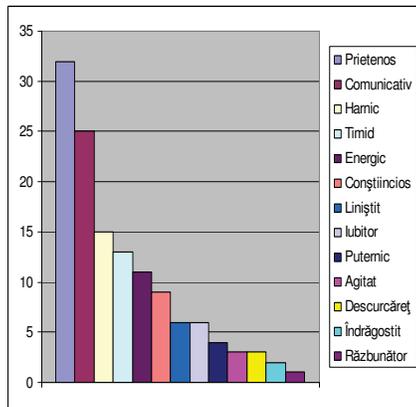


Fig. 1. Characteristic features for urban students

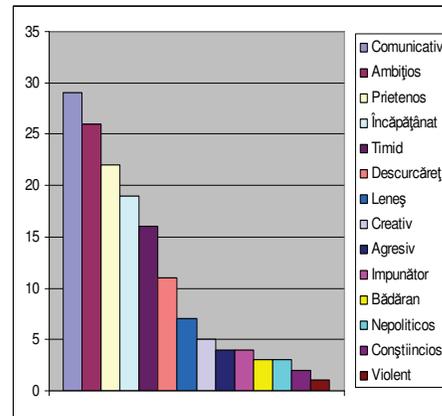


Fig. 2. Characteristic features for rural students

As shown in Fig. 1, rural students mostly have positive characteristics. In fact, the only characteristic that could be classified as negative is "vengeance," which is anyway encountered in a very small number of students.

From these data, it is easy to draw the conclusion that a large part of rural adolescents have a high self-esteem, and the characteristic features listed are related to important values in life such as friendship, love, diligence, love, etc. In Fig. 2, we encounter new features not found in Fig. 1. We have positive and negative features in urban students. Here we are dealing with aggression, lack of politeness, laziness and even violence.

Self-esteem is lower than in rural areas, and urban teenagers appear to be aware of this, not finding it difficult to recognize it. This is also a good thing, to some extent, letting us conclude that although we are talking about some students whose behaviors tend to be largely deviant, we are also talking about some uninhibited young people, whom do not fear or feel shame to recognize what they are actually. (Buciuceanu 2007)

The second question also refers to the description of the respondents, but goes deeper into the problem, wanting to find out exactly how many teenage pupils have aggressive behaviors, and how many do not.

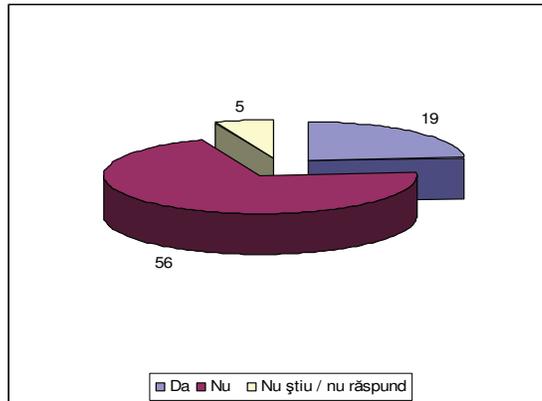


Fig. 3 Aggression as a characteristic feature in teenagers

As expected, we can see from Fig. 3, that many more aggressive adolescents emerged than had been the case for the first item.

It should be noted that among the 19 respondents who answered positively, 7 are female and 11 are urban. Of the five questioners who have abstained from the answer, we can only say that they are either undecided or haven't quite understood what the term "aggressiveness" refers to, or have felt reserved to provide such information about them.

The third item refers to the students family of origin. Starting from the hypothesis that the family environment determines the development of the personality of the individual, I wanted to see to what extent this hypothesis is true, as well as the situation of the Romanian families in our time.

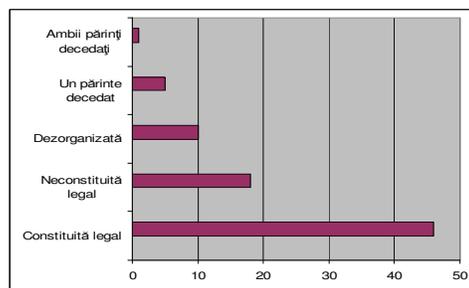


Fig. 4 the family of origin

Following the graph shown in Fig. 4, it can be clearly seen that most of the families are normal, legal, but there are also a large number of families with concubine, disorganized, single parent families or even with both deceased parents.

It seems that nowadays more and more couples prefer the situation of concubinage, and there are almost as many disintegrating or disorganized families.

The fourth question also concerns the family of origin, the status of parents, more precisely the parents' job. I was interested in learning about the school environment and how much time parents have to spend with teenagers.

Therefore, in the case of mothers, the most frequent trades were those of a cashier, a commercial agent, a medical assistant, a tailor, or a civil servant.

In the case of fathers, I have encountered trades such as: driver, engineer, electrician, mechanic, security guard or unskilled worker.

As with the previous items, the students' answers again noted differences between rural and urban areas, the predictable differences that I expected to meet. This time, the differences referred to the lack of parental occupation, which is alarming for many rural areas.

From the above tables, there are large differences between rural and urban backgrounds regarding the status of the parents of the students surveyed

The fifth question in the questionnaire also referred to the pupils' background, namely brothers and sisters. Here the differences between rural and urban areas were not so great.

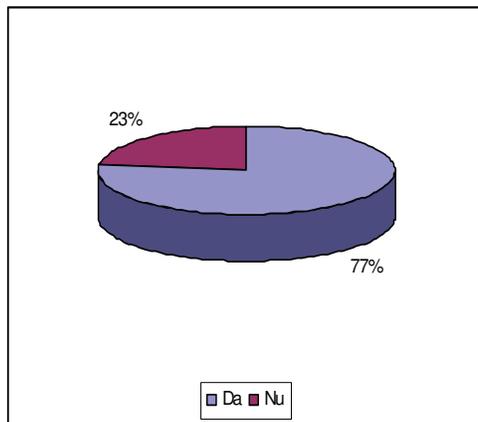


Fig. 5 Rural environment siblings

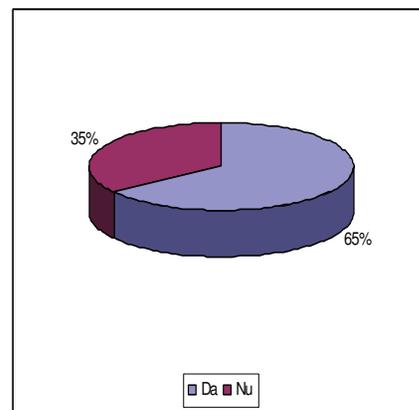


Fig.6 Urban environment siblings

As shown in Fig. 5 and 6, in both rural and urban areas, more than 50% of students said they still have siblings. Of these, more than 60% have a single brother or sister, and in urban areas less than 10% have more than 2 brothers, while in rural areas more than 10% have more than 2 brothers .

The sixth item of the questionnaire refers to family violence. The purpose of this question was to collect more and more data about the family environment in which the teenager grew up and about the education received.

Again, we found differences between urban and rural areas, but not very large. So I chose to do another parallel between the two investigated environments to find out how much family violence influences adolescent life.

Fig. 7 Family violence in rural environment

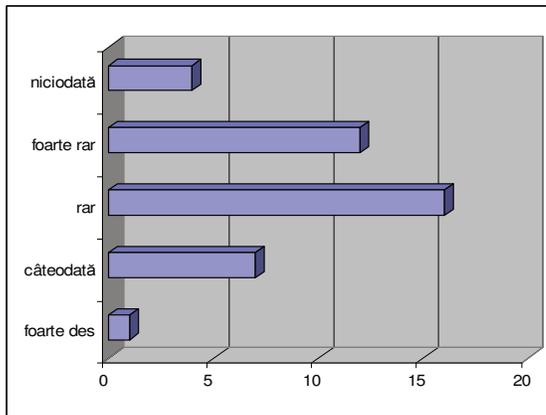
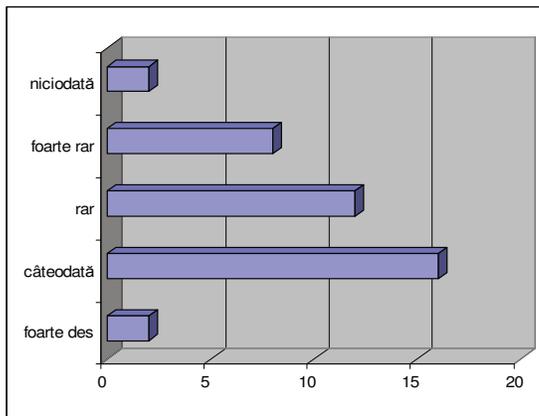


Fig. 8 Family violence in urban environment

As Fig. 7 shows, violence is used in rural areas, but in most cases it is not used frequently. Most of the respondents said that this is sometimes the case,

but there is also a small group of questioned respondents who have responded that in their families violence is very common.

Even in the urban environment we do not find very large differences, but we have a few, which are important to be mentioned and analyzed.

Thus, as shown in Fig. 8, violence in urban areas is less common than in rural areas, most of whom consider this to be rare.

Family violence appears to be present in both environments, in larger or smaller proportions. It is interesting to note that all respondents who have chosen the "very often" variant come from disorganized families, and those who have chosen the "very rare" variant all come from normal, legally constituted families.

By question no. 9, I referred to unpunished offenses committed by adolescents. In this context, responses were different from those of the previous question, but the responses between rural and urban were similar.

According to the processed data there is a category of about 20% of adolescents who have committed crimes, but for which they have not been punished in any way. In the top of these anti-social acts of illicit nature in the countryside is theft and physical abuse, and in the urban environment there is vandalism, physical abuse and driving without a permit.

It should also be noted that all juvenile questioners in the urban area are male, while in rural areas the proportions are equal.

Another important aspect would be related to the families of origin, which in the case of the rural ones are mostly normal, legally constituted, and in the case of the urban environment, the families of origin are mostly disorganized, with parents have a criminal record.

Also, among the respondents who confirmed the committing of unpunished offenses, only 4 of them were characterized as aggressive.

The next question presented in the questionnaire also refers to the delinquency phenomenon among minors in order to produce a clearer statistic on the number of juvenile delinquents in Romania. The question referred to the friends / colleagues of the questioned adolescents who committed illegal deeds. The responses between rural and urban areas were again similar.

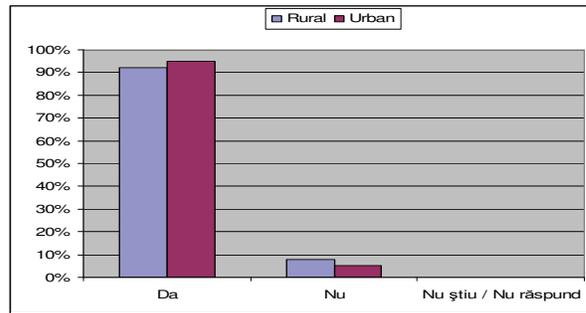


Fig. 10 Record of answers to the question “Do you know any friends/colleagues of your age that have committed illegal deeds?”

As can be seen from Fig. 10, a great number of adolescents said they had knowledge of minors who committed criminal offenses, and only less than 10% had denied this.

There was no answer to this question.

The next question was to find out the adolescent's opinion about the offenses, namely, their gravity, choosing the one he considers the most serious. The answers were as predictable as possible, which shows that adolescents are not as immature as it is supposed to.

Adolescents have a clear view of important things, which shows that they are perfectly aware of the facts they commit, especially when it comes to delinquency, whether in rural or urban areas (Iacobuță 2002).

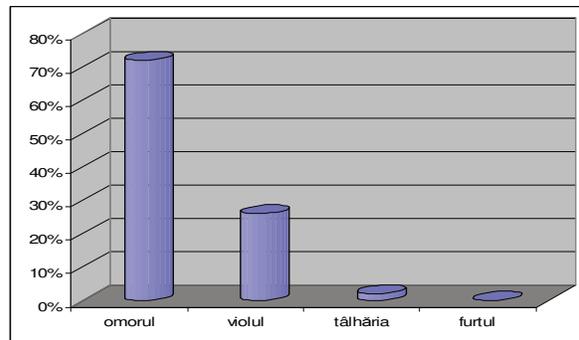


Fig. 11 Classification of crimes depending of severity

As Figure 11 shows, in adolescents' view, murder is the most serious offense, followed by a rather large rape difference. In most adult opinion

surveys, all these two offenses show a very high percentage, which shows that adolescents think like adults.

Robbery was regarded as a serious offense by one person, while the theft was not considered by anyone to be a serious crime. It is, however, interesting that theft, the most common crime among adolescents, is not considered a serious offense, while the most rare murder among minors is considered by most respondents to be the most serious offense.

Through question 12, I wanted to find out the main reasons in the teenagers' view, for which young people commit antisocial acts.

The students had a choice of up to 3 variants from the proposed list, and the answers were very varied and interesting at the same time. It is important to note that many respondents have exhausted all three options required by the questionnaire.

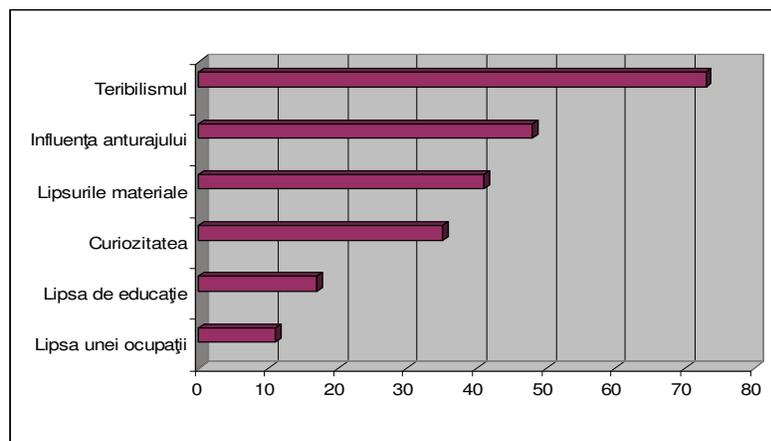


Fig.12 Reasons why teenagers commit antisocial act

As Fig. 12 shows, adolescents considered that the main reason why anti-social acts are committed at this age is terrorism, followed by a small difference from entourage influence, material shortages and curiosity. Less listed were the lack of education and the lack of occupation.

We also analyzed the answers of the students who confessed to the previous questions that they have committed criminal offenses. They chose 60% curiosity, and the remaining 40% was divided between rebellious and material shortcomings. None of the respondents have chosen the variants "entourage influence" or "lack of education".

Another interesting aspect was the fact that the "lack of education" variant was chosen by 100% of girls, 80% of which belong to the urban

environment. It should also be noted that disobedience was 100% chosen in urban areas.

### **Conclusions**

This questionnaire confirmed the hypothesis that delinquent behavior is formed and not inherited. A very important role here has the environment in which the minor grows and develops. If the family uses violence, then there is a risk that the minor will have a violent and aggressive behavior.

Minors are a vulnerable social category. The reasons that lead to delinquency are varied, ranging from fearlessness and disobedience to the influence of the entourage. To combat the social phenomenon of juvenile delinquency it is more than necessary to actively involve the competent authorities, educational institutions and society.

It is gratifying, however, that juvenile delinquency among high school adolescents occurs at a relatively small percentage, and we can not talk about serious facts that can affect society.

A negative thing found in the questionnaire survey was the family situation in Romania. We have found many cases of families in concubinage and disoriented families. In many cases, we have noticed that it may be a factor leading to deviant behavior among adolescents. The differences between rural and urban areas were not major, and where they existed, it was demonstrated that high school students in the urban environment are more emancipated and more modern than rural ones, but antisocial facts and their causes are, to a large extent, the same.

Yet, although juvenile delinquency is not very common in high schools, it is a growing phenomenon and quick and sustainable solutions should be found to diminish this issue that affects the whole of society.

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