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DEVIANT BEHAVIORS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AS A RESULT OF INADEQUATE PARENTAL ATTACHMENT

Karina A. Ainoutdinova*, Irina N. Ainoutdinova

Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies, Kazan Federal University, 18 Kremlyovskaya St. Kazan, Kazan, RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of the problems associated with effects that family has on a child's behavior. Our focus was on correlation between deviant behavior of young people and inadequate parental attachment. Relevance of this study is based on several fairly important, albeit dramatic, features of today including rapid increase in crime rates aggravated by involvement of young people in the new drug-related crimes and cybercrime, and a reported prevalence of disadvantaged and dysfunctional families in Russia. The purpose of this work is to examine various forms of parental attachment and assess their influence on deviant behavior of children. To these ends, we aimed to specify and clarify the conceptual apparatus; identify most common types of attachment within a family and forms of youth deviant behavior hereby; assess the modes and effects of inadequate parental attachment resulting in deviances and disorders among adolescents. Research of authentic sources allowed for a deep comparative analysis on the reported problem. The results confirmed the importance of a family in the individual system of life values, principles and goals.

INTRODUCTION

KEY WORDS
family, child,
adolescent, parent,
affection, impact,
deviant behavior.

Today, in the course of global challenges Russia is gradually moving along the path of informatization, technologization and digitalization. This process actualizes enormous institutional, structural, and regulatory changes in all spheres of society including economy, politics, social and spiritual life of people. With all the variety of chops and changes, not always unambiguous and often controversial, certain types of human activities, relationships and ties between people, are essentially evolving and transforming. However, most of the traditional social institutions such as family, school, church, etc. remain almost unchanged within a system of life values, principles and goals of each individual [1]. According to a research being conducted since 2018 within the framework of the project "Transformation of parent-child relations in the epoch of informatization of society", the concept of family still holds a leading position in the hierarchy of life values of most of the respondents of different age groups [2].

Young scientists involved into the project believe that the recent development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can equally have both positive and negative effects. One of the largest negative consequences of ICT can be traced in the family sphere, as ICT do affect transformation of marital, parent-child and siblings` relationships [3]. For example, an ordinary purchase or use of electronic devices may often be the cause of emergence of completely new pedagogical and psychological problems that were previously considered atypical [2]. The "advanced" level of use of technology allows adolescents to avoid parental control, as the "digital generation gap" undermines parental authority, reduces scope and quality of communication between children and adults, and minimizes their joint activities and leisure time [4]. In addition, the increase in risks associated with virtual environment affects socialization of adolescents, leading to ICT-related deviations such as cyberbullying, Internet addiction, Internet harassment, suicidal tendencies, etc. [2, 3].

Recognizing the generational conflict, expressed in some misunderstanding and behavioral confrontation between the "analog" parents and children conditionally attributed to a "digital generation Z" [4], the scientists, however, admit that even in the "digital age" people still need love, care, and emotional intimacy, and prefer to realize their desires for close, warm and healthy relations mostly within their families [2]. However, parental love and attachment may acquire inadequate forms, which lead to deviant behavior among their children. Ironically, deviance not only violates the social norms and conformity but also destroys parental hopes and best expectations [5].

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on theoretical, socio-legal, socio-psychological and comparative approaches we examined the problem of inadequate parental attachment capable to cause inter alia deviant behavior among their children. Along with Murray Bowen's family systems theory [6] and John Bowlby's evolutionary theory of attachment [7], we also used some essential provisions of Mary D. Salter Ainsworth's attachment theory [8] as primary sources of information relevant to the goals of our study. M. Bowen's theory describes "family" as a highly emotional unit affecting human behavior, whereas "systems" are viewed as complex interactions capable to produce deep feelings of attachment within that unit [6]. Attachment, according to J. Bowlby, is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space, it does not have to be reciprocal and may cause specific behaviors in children [7]. Mary Ainsworth devised an assessment technique called the Strange Situation Classification (SSC) in order to investigate

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*Corresponding Author

Email:
karina.arturovna14@mail.ru
Tel.: +7 906 111 38 04

how attachments might vary between children. She also identified four main styles of attachment in adults (secure, anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) [8]. Based on their observations, four distinct phases of attachment were further outlined by their followers [7]. Study of huge masses of authentic literature allowed for a deep comparative analysis on the reported issue.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Family is the most important social institution where reproduction of new generations occurs and grounds for social, material and spiritual interaction of people are laid. Parents are the closest and, therefore, most influential figures in life of each person [9]. Parents initially create a picture of the world to their children, give start to their primary socialization, thereby directing, forming, stimulating, or, conversely, limiting development of the child's identity. To learn how to live and work in a strange world, a child needs spatial and semantic landmarks, a kind of generalized scheme of the universe and an idea of his own place in it [9]. In this sense, parents shall set unique rules and parenting environment, help or hinder formation of a child's self-esteem, transmit certain behavioral patterns accepted or denied by society, etc. [10].

Parents, therefore, have a significant impact on the development of a child. Sometimes parents deliberately use a power of impact so as to "built" what they want. Ideally, guided by the experience and behavior patterns of elders, as well as physical and emotional attachment to parents, children shall develop as active, healthy and positively motivated people. However, due to a number of circumstances (character accentuation, upbringing defects, lack of social behavior skills, incomplete families, material difficulties, etc.) [11], children may manifest non-adaptive behavior, which over time either can be neutralized or aggravated to the extent that it goes beyond the generally accepted norms and standards in order to become destructive, detrimental to themselves or society, so as to move into the category of deviant behavior [3].

Broadly, deviant behavior is any form of human conduct that is contrary to the dominant norms of society [12]. Deviant behavior can be explained from different angles within a variety of sciences (sociology, psychology, pedagogy, criminology, biology, etc.), theories (structural functionalism, symbolic interaction, social control, conflict, labeling, attachment, differential associations, family systems theory, etc.) and approaches (biological, psychological, pedagogical, sociological, criminological, etc.). Deviance often manifests itself in two types of activities, namely, formal (criminal violations of formally enacted laws) and informal (violations of informal social norms that have not yet been codified into law). Formal deviances include crimes: robbery, theft, rape, murder, assault, etc., though deviant behavior is not always illegal. Informal deviance is any public expression of differing mode of conduct that surpasses the normal limit of acceptable behavior and as such is regarded as either normal or egregious and shocking, depending on cultures, traditions, morals and expectations. Similarly, violation of social norms is not always a negative action. Positive deviations may occur at times, if behavior can still be classified as positive or acceptable [12].

According to American criminologists, the roots of deviant behavior must, first of all, be sought in the family, despite established stereotypes about the dominant influence of peers and society [11]. Many recognized theories on criminal behavior ignore the role of the family and, therefore, do not explain the specific parenting problems, which, most likely, can lead to subsequent deviant behavior. Criminologists usually show interest in deviants only after they have committed criminal acts, when it is too late to learn about their family situation, the relationships and the emotional climate in the family, especially during the period of upbringing of such individuals [3].

Supporters of the evolving "digital era" impose by all means individualization, independence, and non-standard individual behavior, thereby contrasting generally accepted social norms and values based on the close interaction within a family. Even though some extraordinary patterns of human conduct (creativity, workaholicism, extra qualifications, etc.) may positively contribute to the development of society, they still go beyond social stereotypes and ordinary expectations [12]. Desire to get rid of parental care at early age, addiction to computer gadgets, consumerism, pragmatism, and self-assertion in any way or at any cost based on the "How & What I Want" principle, may often lead to conflicts and misunderstanding in a family and provoke behavioral disorders in adolescents. Lack of due supervision or attention from parents will only exacerbate situation and cause depression, violence and other deviances [13].

According to Bowen's theory of family systems, only analysis of interaction between all members of the family allows for a better understanding of any individual. Development and behaviors of one family member affects the rest of the family since they are living by default in the same "emotional field". The complexity of emotional stimuli transmitted and perceived by family members at different levels of interaction or functioning creates an emotional atmosphere or field, which, in turn, affects everyone [5]. It is impossible, thus, to deeply understand a person without knowing his family.

Bowen's family systems theory [5] is interrelated in this context with Bowlby's attachment theory [7], and both are recommended for family therapy, since many individual deviations and other family problems arise either from emotional break in families or due to unhealthy parental attachment. In fact, both theories are examples of psychological models that describe dynamics of interpersonal relationships in a family. An important idea of Bowlby's theory is that emotional attachment, formed by at least one "significant" mentor (mother, father, etc.), directly affects child's development, as attachments between

children and "significant adults" are formed, even if caregivers do not show enough attention or responsiveness in a course of social interaction [11].

Attachment, as a process of mutual emotional connection in a parent-child relationship, persists for indefinite time and even if they are separated. Positive affection allows children to feel confident and safe enough to explore the world and form healthy relations. Such attachment also contributes to development of conscience, self-esteem and empathy; it produces logical thinking, ability to control behavior, helps to reduce risks of conflicts, etc. [8]. Inadequate attachment, on the contrary, can have negative impacts on formation of a holistic picture of a child's world, limit his social contacts, devalue feelings of responsibility and self-esteem, lead to delays in the child's emotional, social, physical and mental development, etc. [3]. Inadequate attachment can be a result of some trauma in previous relationships of attachment caused by loss [8], neglect, deprivation, abuse, addiction, inconsistency, rejection, excessive custody. Lack of attention and care, as well as their excessiveness, can lead to situations when the child will not feel attachment for his caregiver, which in the absence of close healthy connections will only increase likelihood of emergence of deviant behavior [8; 9]. Ainsworth later supplemented Bowlby's theory with the specific types of attachment [8].

Inadequate parental attachment can take various forms, and although it is usually based on love for a child, its consequences are quite deplorable [8]. "Obsessed love" is expressed in desire of parents to bring their child up in a sense of global dependence on them. As a rule, "parents-proprietors" ignore the child's right to independence from his early age; destroy desire for independence and autonomy. Such hyper-care and neglect of the child's individual rights completely subordinate that child to a parental will causing neurotic attachment to parents. Such adolescents easily become victims of volitional, influential leaders of various criminal or sectarian groups, and as they grow older, their attachment to their parents can grow into revenge and aggression [14; 15].

Another common type of inadequate parental attachment is "ambitious love", when parents seek to satisfy their ambitions and realize their own unfulfilled dreams through a child. Such ties are always accompanied by some "condition" contrary to healthy parental love when child's identity, life choices are respected and supported, even if they do not coincide with parental wishes and preferences. In response, ambivalent attachment arises in a child who is accustomed to manipulate and demonstrate ambivalence toward his parents [8]. Constant maneuvering between "attachment" and "rejection" soon becomes an accepted norm for such children, and their exceptionality, generated by parents' ambitions, becomes a "pass" to the alluring world of "adventures" and addictions entered in order to escape from reality and acquire desired emotions, recognition on the grounds of only to them assigned "permission" to violate generally accepted social norms and even laws, and rights of other people [9; 12].

Inadequate attachment, known as "sharing roles", is common with parents who expect and demand too much from their children, although a child, due to his age and limited opportunities, is unable to accomplish what they want from him. Parents look at the child as a source of support, comfort and love, while in response they show complete disregard for the child's needs and deprive him of the natural "emotional field" of the family. If a child is forced to accept this role, then he will develop an abnormal identity predisposed to various, highly severe, deviances. As a victim of "avoiding attachment", such person is closed, gloomy, and does not trust any honest relationship. He perceives adults as "abusing enemies", which often gives rise to their aggression and violence [11].

This research confirmed our hypothesis of the need for a more comprehensive study of correlation between the youth deviant behavior and inadequate parental attachment. It was found that there are gaps and no unity in understanding and interpretation of most of the concepts by scholars, which leads to ambiguity or misrepresentation of the phenomenon. No proofs of direct links between deviances and family impact have been found in most of the recognized theories of deviance [13]. However, it was established that family is crucial in life of any person though lack or deficiency of adequate parental attachment or emotional intimacy negatively affects formation and development of his identity and cause disorders and deviances. We examined various forms of parental attachments and assessed their impact on child's behavior. Also, we clarified the conceptual apparatus, identified most common types of attachments and forms of youth deviant behavior. We came to conclusion that inadequate parental attachments result in deviances and disorders among adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study is important for understanding the phenomenon of child-parental attachments in the family and their influence on the deviant behavior of the youth. Relevance of this study is based on several fairly important, albeit dramatic, features of today including rapid, though not always positive, changes in all spheres that cause stress, instability, insecurity and doubt; striking patterns of social inequality, exacerbated by a serious gap between the rich and the poor; increase in crime rates aggravated by involvement of young people in new drug-related crimes and cybercrime; emergence of multiple lifestyles shaped by the loss of traditions, values or morals and accompanied by the growing prevalence of disadvantaged families.

Research of authentic sources allowed for a deep comparative analysis on the reported issue. The results confirmed the importance of a family in the individual system of life values, principles and goals. In line with Bowen's family systems theory and Bowlby's attachment theory, we plan to further explore the

consequences of inadequate parental attachment and other determining factors that provoke disorders and deviances among the youth. In our opinion, increased attention should be paid to prevention and correction of deviant behaviors among young people who may easily fall under the influence of destructive minor groups that praise and exhibit deviant patterns of behavior or adult criminals who lure them into their networks. The article may be of interest to educators, psychologists, sociologist, and practitioners in the field of criminology in terms of its specified conceptual apparatus, results of a comparative theoretical analysis and concise typology of family attachments presented.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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