

ROLE OF SCHOOL IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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Abstract: Juvenile Delinquency has always been a problem that has attracted the attention of all the social scientists around the world. In spite of so many steps being taken to curb it the incidence of delinquent activities is constantly rising around the world. The present paper views delinquency not as an innate or inborn characteristic but rather a characteristic an individual acquires while being in a particular environment. Almost all the studies also point out towards the role of different factors in fostering Delinquency such as Family, school, peer group, neighborhood, media and State. The present paper explores the Role of School in facilitating or impeding Delinquency within the theoretical framework of the Labelling Theory (Becker 1956).

Index Terms; Juvenile Delinquency, Deviance, Labelling.

INTRODUCTION

According to some Sociologists, Sociology of Deviance has collapsed under the impact of new social conditions and under the weight of its own contradictions. The concept of Deviance emerged as part of the scientific search for ways to control population, leading to the creation of new categories of people such as the 'insane' or the deviant. Whenever we talk of Deviance one concept which immediately comes to our mind is Juvenile Delinquency. Apart from the universal and natural feeling that adults cherish for children and more especially disgruntled and baffled children, the understanding that a joyful and a healthy youth is the best promise for a future mature society has resulted in a lot of time, energy and money to be spent on understanding Delinquency and the factors contributing to it. Juvenile Delinquency has always been a problem that has attracted the attention of all the social scientists time and again, be it the modern and advanced countries or the developing ones. In spite of high standards of living ensuring adequate necessities and many amenities of life the

compulsory universal education till a fairly high age the number and incidence of Delinquents is shooting up. The situation is more alarming in the Developed countries. However even in the Developing Countries as steady economic development takes place resulting in migration leading to rapid urbanization in certain regions a lot of changes are taking place and the problem of Delinquency is shooting up. Indian Society though rural in character, predominantly still attached to traditional values and culture has also faced the attack of the powerful forces resulting in problems of increasing maladjustments like the other Developed Countries.

UNDERSTANDING DELINQUENCY BASED ON REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The subject of Delinquency has been studied extensively by various scholars around the globe. The studies have focused on different aspects of the problem. Some studies have focused on biological explanations which emphasize on the role of biological factors such as the body types, facial features etc. Some studies have adopted sociological explanations which emphasize on the role of environmental factors in precipitating delinquent behavior such as the concept of 'anomie', 'social structure', the concept of 'gang', 'culture', 'differential association', 'the concept of self', the importance of goals and success etc. While continuing with the sociological explanations, we cannot afford to miss the most famous theory of Deviance that is the "Labelling Theory". The theory is associated with the work of Becker (1956) among others. A number of studies have adopted psychological explanations which emphasize on psychological factors fostering delinquency such as the 'individual's ego', that is Freud's concept of 'id', 'ego', and 'superego' etc. Still others have adopted a multifactor explanation which includes both sociological and psychological principles. Almost all the perspectives focus on the description and explanation of Delinquency.

The present paper views Delinquency not as an innate or inborn characteristic but as a characteristic an individual acquires while being in a particular environment. Almost all the studies also point out towards the role of different factors in fostering Delinquency such as Family, school, peer group, neighborhood, media and State. The present paper explores the

Role of School in facilitating or impeding Delinquency within the theoretical framework of the Labelling Theory (Becker 1956). The Labelling theorists distinguish between primary deviance, in which everyone engages but which has a few consequences for the individuals and secondary deviance, where the social reaction to deviant actions creates a 'master status' of deviance for some people. Master status is where one aspect of a person's identity dominates the perceptions of others about that person.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

In addition to other factors the school has a very important role to play in facilitating or impeding Delinquency. Indeed, education is frequently seen as a medium through which such values as morality, citizenship and respect for others are inculcated. Teachers and the educational system of which they are the most important part, can therefore be seen as formal agents of social control. What we call education is predominantly aimed at preserving certain standards, enhancing children's potential towards the achievement and curbing yet other forms of behavior, thought and feeling which are deemed unacceptable. There is considerable evidence and informed opinion pointing to the critical influence of school in facilitating or impeding Delinquency. This role results from the interaction of the child, his inheritance and acquired characteristics up to the time of entry to school -with the school, its organization, prevalent culture and the demands it makes on the child. Although schools and teachers are not synonymous, they are closely intermeshed that in the areas which matter most, such as school atmosphere and the child's attitude to school, they are inseparable. The child when he comes to school is not a clean slate. He already carries the consequences of his genetic endowment, basic intellectual potential and style, the fundamentals of his personality structure and some degree of socialization. As a result of his treatment by his parents he has developed, to varying levels, some survival skills, social habits and ways of coping with other people. The seeds of basic values and attitudes will already have been sown. Most importantly, however, the child will have developed some primitive and elementary notions about himself -who he is, who cares for him and whom he cares for and how he should respond to boundary setting

attempts by adults and other children. By the time a child is old enough to officially commit offences he will also have gone through primary school and will, in a year or so be transferring to secondary school. In the school the child begins to be parted from his own family for relatively long periods. The anxiety resulting from such separation is soon dissipated as the child becomes involved in a myriad activities with the largest group of agetates he is likely to have encountered. For some children particularly those who even at that age, are unsure of parental interest, the separation and enforced company can either increase the anxiety or demand that, for the sake of survival, the child should reduce his anxiety about inconsistent parental attention. In either case this group of children is likely to present special problems for the teacher both academic and behavioral and bring particular children to his notice.

All the studies of delinquent's school career attest to the teacher's remarkable ability to identify and predict troublesome and later delinquent behavior. This is almost invariably because the background information, quality and quantity of parental interest, the child's clothing and general presentation and his ability to behave well in a group setting alert the teacher to home difficulties, lead to greater vigilance and therefore, better management of child's behavioral problems. However the school can play a very important role in the sense that a child from a poor background is still young enough to be diverted from unruliness if the school is so organized as to compensate for his difficulties and equip him with better coping skills.

Liking and disliking of a school depends to a large extent on the kind of family and school environment being provided to the child. When the child leaves his or her home and starts going to school, he already has developed varying levels of survival skills, social habits and ways of coping with other people, that is some degree of socialization has already taken place. School possesses the power to shape the personality of the child in the most appropriate way by providing varied opportunities to the child and developing an adjusting nature and coping skills. According to Ladd and Burgess (2001) and Walker And Graham (2019) 'School liking' is a term

used to define the student's perception and feelings for the school to be positive. According to Ladd et.al (2000), Riglin et. al (2013) 'School liking' is related to both student engagement and scholastic achievement.

However it is very essential that if the school is presenting a very healthy environment to the child to grow it should also be backed by an ideal family consisting of parents who really encourage and motivate the child's interest in the school activities and studies. It has been seen that children who show their willingness and happiness to go to school, had an appropriate environment in the school and the required encouragement and motivation by their parents as well and contrary to this children who show a disliking for their school are not getting the kind of healthy environment and appropriate attention from the school or were coming from families ,where nobody ever encouraged or took interest in their studies. Similarly the teacher also plays a very important role as she shapes the personality of the child. After the child leaves the protective environment of the home, it is the teacher who now takes place of the mother, in a more formal setting of a 'school'. The teacher gradually becomes a 'model' to imitate for the young child. It is in fact the responsibility of the whole school to handle each and every child with delicate care and protection. In a study by Theimann (2016) it was found that positive teacher -student relationship in the context of positive bonds to school were related to more positive pro-social attitudes and lower rates of delinquency in young people from age 13-16 years.

In addition to the role of the teacher the location of the school also is very important in our analysis of the school as a factor in our understanding of delinquent behavior in the sense that a child who is coming from a very poor family ,is more likely to develop a lack of interest in going to the school if it is located very far from his home, as it would involve expenditure on transportation, which is beyond the capacity of a very poor family.

It is one of the ironies of the present system, that without any valid reason, we often blame only the child for difficulties such as truancy, disruptiveness and offending rather than extend the blame to encompass the school. Moreover, the whole process of discrimination starts with the school itself.

Generally the children who come from poor families are the ones who are always labelled easily if they indulge in any kind of offending or misconduct. On the other hand children who belong to rich affluent families are never given any label of any sort for their deviant acts even within the school. While analyzing the features of a school in our attempt to understand, how a school contributes towards the making or unmaking of a delinquent, it is important to take into account the participation of a child in extra-curricular activities. In addition to the normal school curriculum, consisting of the semester system which is followed by the exams, providing extra curricular activities to the child is also very important. Moreover the literature shows that there is a negative correlation between school performance and delinquency, that is teenagers who were doing poorly in school were more likely to engage in delinquency and vice versa. Several research findings have revealed that academic skills and perception of being good students have been shown to be inversely related to delinquency.(Agnew. 1985, Patterson and other, 1985; White and others. 1987; Wiamrouwski ,Griswold and Roberts,1981).Participation in extra curricular activities reflects a lot on the quality of socialization and the family background of the child.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on a number of empirical studies it becomes quite clear that the School has a pertinent role to play in the genesis of juvenile delinquency. It also points out to certain deficiencies in the 'system' itself. When a substantial proportion of the children show their unwillingness to go to school, it certainly points out to the role of the school in inducing delinquent behavior. All children are curious and inquisitive, though to varying degrees. This inquisitiveness however needs to be fostered if it is to flourish. Being brought up in impoverished and drab environments, going to schools where play has to give way to the drudgery of repetitive work of little interest in the classroom are poor nourishment for fostering the curiosity of a typical future delinquent. As a result he shows little interest in lessons. This does not mean that his interest cannot be kindled through imaginative teaching but rather the teacher needs to work harder than

usual to motivate him. The teacher, knowing the quality of such children are more concerned with survival and establishing control than academic achievement. Such children are likely to present a range of behavioral and scholastic difficulties which persuade the teachers to pay more attention to the child's wayward behavior than his academic development. As numerous studies (Long et al.1965 and Robertson 1981) have shown that this in fact reinforces the problem behavior and increases the probability of its recurrence . Eighty nine percent of 202 school superintendents in a study stated that primary and elementary teachers should have additional training in recognizing and understanding signs of maladjustment (Massachusetts. 1957). As mentioned earlier, the whole process of discrimination leads to easy labelling of the children coming from poor families, for any kind of misbehavior within the school. The process of labelling which starts from within the school itself, continues till the time the child is institutionalized for his deviant behavior in an Observation Home. In fact it is the children from poor families who are always caught, punished and reformed as compared to children from rich affluent families who never come to an observation home as they get easily bailed out.

It is because of this reason that a number of times, the schools have been criticized for their failure to provide the Nation's youth with moral and democratic ideals. Hence in the present times the role of the school in inducing delinquent behavior is quite clear as it is itself contributing towards the labelling of an individual as a delinquent by actively discriminating between children from poor families and children from rich affluent and well placed families.

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