

ETIOLOGY OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author analyzes the issue of etiology, specifically the causes of juvenile delinquency. It is emphasized that determining the concept of the etiology of criminality is crucial for understanding the etiology of juvenile delinquency. In order to identify the causes and factors, or, more precisely, to determine the etiology of juvenile delinquency at an earlier stage, it is necessary to first understand the etiology of criminality in general. Through a comprehensive analysis of the etiology of criminality, conclusions can be drawn regarding why certain individuals choose to commit criminal acts. Specifically, an answer is sought to the question of what motivates some individuals to come into conflict with the law or become perpetrators of various offenses.

The causes of crime and criminal behavior, the conditions that lead to their occurrence in practice, and the motives for committing crimes are fundamental questions in criminology, both theoretically and empirically. However, many issues in this area remain insufficiently researched and analyzed. Despite the existence of numerous theories, practical research, and scientific reflections on the causes of crime, there remains a limited understanding of these causes—whether they involve mass social phenomena or specific instances of criminal behavior.

If the etiology of criminality refers to the reasons behind engaging in criminal behavior, then the etiology of juvenile delinquency is focused on uncovering the causes and factors that lead to delinquent behavior in children. Through the etiology of juvenile delinquency, the question of why children engage in delinquent acts is addressed.

The author stresses that the etiology of juvenile delinquency aims to identify the roots of criminal behavior among children in society. By examining the etiology of juvenile delinquency, one can directly identify the factors—both objective and subjective—that influence children to become perpetrators of such acts. In general terms, the etiology of juvenile delinquency seeks to determine the reasons behind the prevalence of this phenomenon among children.

Keywords: children, crime, delinquency, causes, impact.

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INTRODUCTION

Determining the concept of the etiology of criminality is of particular importance when determining the etiology of juvenile delinquency. In order to identify the causes or factors contributing to juvenile delinquency at an earlier stage, it is necessary to first understand the etiology of criminality in general. Through a comprehensive analysis of criminality's etiology, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding why some individuals choose to commit crimes. Specifically, this analysis helps answer the question of what motivates some individuals to come into conflict with the law or to engage in criminal behavior.

Etymologically, the word "etiology" is derived from two separate Greek words: *aitia*, meaning "reason," and *logos*, meaning "science" or "study." Criminal etiology is a branch of criminology that examines the general causes of crime, as well as both mass social phenomena and individual, specific, immediate causes, conditions, and motives for criminal behavior. In essence, criminal etiology focuses on studying criminogenic factors—those factors that are crucial to the commission of criminal acts.

The reasons behind the emergence of crime and criminal behavior, the conditions that facilitate their occurrence, and the motives for committing criminal acts are fundamental questions in criminology, both theoretically and empirically. However, many questions in this area remain insufficiently researched and analyzed. Numerous theories, practical research, and scientific reflections exist on the causes of crime, but they all highlight the inadequacy of a full understanding of the causes of crime, whether they involve mass social phenomena or the specific causes of individual criminal behavior (Gaberov, 2023).

Through the study of criminal etiology, the aim is to answer the question of why criminal acts occur in society. Criminal etiology explores the root causes of criminal behavior, identifying the factors that are essential to the emergence of criminality. In criminological literature, these causes are referred to as criminogenic factors.

According to various authors, there are numerous criminogenic factors that are significant for understanding criminal etiology—factors that directly lead to the practice of criminality in reality.

Etiology of juvenile delinquency

If criminal etiology refers to the reasons for engaging in criminal behavior, then the etiology of juvenile delinquency focuses on discovering the causes and factors that lead to juvenile delinquency. Through the etiology of juvenile delinquency, an answer is provided to the question of why children choose to commit delinquent acts.

The etiology of juvenile delinquency seeks to determine the roots of criminal behavior among children in society. By examining the etiology of juvenile delinquency, one directly addresses both objective and subjective factors that influence children to become perpetrators of delinquent acts. Generally, the etiology of juvenile delinquency aims to identify the reasons behind the occurrence of this phenomenon among children. The etiology of criminality, including the etiology of juvenile delinquency, can be divided into two interconnected areas. The first area refers to studying juvenile delinquency from the perspective of social structure, cultural norms, living conditions, the influence of various criminogenic factors, societal value conflicts, and so on. The second area concerns the analysis of the process by which a child's personality is shaped, potentially leading them to engage in criminal acts or other prohibited behaviors. More specifically, it refers to the process of the criminalization of the child. This area helps determine why certain children decide to participate in juvenile delinquency.

A significant contribution to understanding the etiology of criminality in general, and juvenile delinquency in particular, is made through the identification of criminogenic factors—factors that lead to criminal behavior. Although the literature presents various classifications of criminogenic factors, we will highlight those of Professor Arnaudovski, which we believe provide a solid framework for understanding the cause-and-effect relationship between the etiology and phenomenology of criminality. According to Arnaudovski, criminogenic factors are divided into three major groups:

Socio-economic factors, including urbanization, industrialization, poverty and wealth disparities, economic issues and crises, housing problems, unemployment, and large migration movements.

Ideological-political factors, such as the influence of political ideologies, cultural euphoria, the impact of mass media, and educational levels.

Personal factors, such as personality structure, psychological mentality and makeup, and mental disorders (Arnaudovski, 2007).

The most effective way to determine the etiology of juvenile delinquency begins with the understanding that juvenile criminality is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It requires a serious, comprehensive approach, considering a variety of criminogenic factors with different levels of strength and interwoven interactions, with particular emphasis on the personal, endogenous factors of the perpetrators. The determination of the etiological factors of juvenile delinquency involves categorizing general, specific, and individual factors as a dialectical relationship between the general, specific, and individual elements.

Factors (causes) of juvenile delinquency

The general factors of juvenile delinquency are those that can be identified in international documents addressing the matter of children, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other legal acts specifically related to this issue. These factors include the obligation of each state to provide and create appropriate conditions for the living and development of children, ensuring children have the necessary conditions for normal and proper development, and establishing mechanisms for their protection. This also includes protection from various negative phenomena, protection from socio-pathological conditions, and providing correct guidance and development to help children become mature individuals. All these factors are characteristic of restorative justice, which is applied in the field of juvenile delinquency. Restorative justice emphasizes greater state involvement in solving the problems arising from juvenile delinquency, establishing protective and contractual legislation that focuses on the minor's personality, non-repressive suppression of juvenile delinquency, and recognizing that minors must be treated differently from adults.

Some authors argue that etiology occupies a central place in the criminological study of criminality. The etiology of juvenile delinquency identifies both general and specific factors that influence children to come into conflict with the law.

The etiology of juvenile delinquency reveals that many factors can influence a child to become a perpetrator of juvenile delinquency. It is important to note that the influence of these criminogenic factors on children can be either direct or indirect. Regardless of whether the influence is direct or indirect, the outcome is the same: children become

involved in juvenile delinquency. Criminogenic factors will be examined in greater detail in the next section. However, it is essential to emphasize that the causes of juvenile delinquency, or the factors influencing the commission of juvenile delinquent acts, should not be studied in isolation.

The best approach to fully understanding the causes of juvenile delinquency is an integrative approach. This approach considers all the causes of juvenile delinquency as interconnected and studied holistically. The etiology of juvenile delinquency plays a crucial role in shaping the prevention system for juvenile delinquency. It is impossible to prevent juvenile delinquent acts if the underlying causes influencing children to engage in delinquent behavior are not identified and understood. Accurately determining the causes of juvenile delinquency guarantees that the state will be able to create an appropriate prevention system for this socially harmful phenomenon (Velkova, 2006).

The etiology of juvenile delinquency, as part of criminological studies on crime committed by children, exhibits a unique specificity. This specificity is evident in the uniqueness of the actors involved in this type of prohibited behavior—namely, the role of children in committing acts of juvenile delinquency. To gain a complete understanding of the causes and factors leading to juvenile delinquency, they must be studied comprehensively and without deviation.

When discussing motivation, the main issue lies in the ability to voluntarily control actions. Delinquents tend to be more impulsive and aggressive, with less ability to control these behaviors. This is explained by a disrupted balance between irritation and inhibition, where irritation is much stronger. Motives (as well as emotions) are defined as the driving forces behind actions—whether good or bad. Some known motives for juvenile delinquents include:

Social and psychological compensation: The juvenile compensates for real or perceived shortcomings.

Revenge motive: The juvenile commits a crime in response to a real or imagined wrong done to them.

Status motive: The juvenile seeks to maintain their status within their social group.

Adventurous motive: Inspired by a desire for adventure, similar to the characters of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

The emergence of children with problems in social behavior is denoted by terms such as educational neglect, maladaptation, youth delinquency, antisocial behavior, and juvenile delinquency. Disturbances in social behavior are characterized by deviations from the normal development of minors in the process of socializing their personality and violating social behavioral norms.

The factors (causes) of juvenile delinquency can be classified into exogenous and endogenous categories. Exogenous factors refer to environmental influences, or external factors, that affect the child. In contrast, endogenous factors relate to the child's internal characteristics, influencing them to engage in juvenile delinquent acts. These internal factors are related to the personality of the child involved in delinquency.

The range of exogenous and endogenous factors influencing juvenile delinquency varies. This is why it is necessary to analyze these criminogenic factors separately. Exogenous factors include the following external influences:

Economic system conditions

Political system conditions

War

Processes of industrialization and urbanization

Family circumstances and relationships

Education

Group influence

Religion

Leisure activities

Mass media influence

Alcoholism

Drug addiction

Prostitution

Gambling

Vagrancy and begging

Conditions in the economic system of a country have a direct relationship with crime rates. Consequently, it can be argued that poor and unfavorable economic conditions are linked to a higher incidence of juvenile delinquency, while good economic conditions can act as a safeguard against it. Often, unfavorable economic conditions also affect the family environment in which the child grows up, making a strong and sustainable economy crucial for preventing juvenile delinquency.

The political system also has an impact on criminal behavior, including juvenile delinquency. This relationship can be expressed in two ways: by linking liberal democracy to various forms of criminality, and by observing the influence of state policies on individuals' behavior.

A state of war in a country inevitably leads to an increase in crime rates, as well as an increase in juvenile delinquency rates. Considering the fact that during a state of war, state institutions are paralyzed in terms of carrying out their regular tasks and activities, it becomes clear that under these conditions, crime increases. Worldwide, a special problem is the participation of children in military conflicts, a number that is constantly growing.

Industrialization refers to the transition from manufacturing to machine production. Since it is a purely economic phenomenon, its impact is indirect, so the effect on juvenile delinquency is not immediate. Industrialization necessarily leads to an increase in cities (urbanization). Many statistical analyses show that in a large number of countries, in parallel with industrialization, the rate of delinquency and crime increases to a certain extent over a longer period of time. This applies primarily to delinquency among young people, which is on the rise in almost all countries. However, when drawing these conclusions, it must be taken into account that statistical correlations, given the possibility of other influencing factors, do not provide complete evidence of the cause-and-effect relationship between these phenomena. Therefore, it is not easy to prove the hypothesis of the connection between urbanization and crime. At the same time, for illustration, developing countries, in which an increasingly intensive process of urbanization and industrialization is taking place, are singled out as countries in which there are no high rates of juvenile delinquency (Milutinovic, Aleksic, 1989).

The family plays a very important role in the process of raising and growing children, and thus in the process of preventing children from entering the scope of juvenile delinquency. According to Aceski, the family is a universal social institution that achieves certain goals. These

goals are not narrowly specialized, but are fundamental and have a general character. Several elements are important for the definition of the family as a social group: full involvement of people within the family, their full activity and participation in achieving its goals, a high degree of understanding and solidarity, as well as the establishment of emotional relations and bonds (Aceski, 2013). It is believed that the family plays a key role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency. The basic moral postulates of the society in which the child lives are initially adopted within the family. Parents, with their relationship to themselves, the child, the family, work, and, in general, society and the world that surrounds them, determine the child's life path. This statement is not intended to minimize the influence of other social factors, groups, and relationships that the child will encounter during his life to form his personality, but to emphasize the crucial influence of the family on the process of education and socialization of the child.

The educational system also plays a role in preventing juvenile delinquency, performing two basic functions: the educational function and the social function. In conditions of destructiveness of the educational framework imposed by the school, i.e. when the character of the young person does not accept the norms imposed by the educational institution, education becomes a criminogenic factor (Kostovic, 1999).

A particularly important issue in the fight against juvenile delinquency is the influence of peers and informal groups. The negative influence of the neighborhood on the occurrence of juvenile delinquency is most often manifested through delinquent groups that undertake actions that are of a prohibited nature, actions that can be subsumed under the umbrella of juvenile delinquency. The more direct and intense the contact with such individuals, the greater the influence on delinquent behavior. Organized groups of professional criminals, who engage in various antisocial behaviors in public, behaviors characterized by a high degree of aggression and violence, have a particularly great criminal influence on children.

Each religion consists of more or less attitudes towards certain social values and relations. In criminological literature, there are certain difficulties in proving this conditionality of criminality directly by religion, but its role should not be neglected. For us, of course, the religion that can influence children to appear as perpetrators of juvenile delinquency is of particular interest. A special social problem is the

harmful action of certain religious groups and sects that call for the commission of various criminal acts for the sake of the interests and benefits of a narrow circle of people. The biggest problem is the "recruitment" of minors. The period of adolescence is very susceptible to the action of all socio-negative factors, which creates a suitable terrain for the activities of sects. If the psychological structure of sect members is analyzed, the following characteristics can be observed: inappropriate behavior, emotional immaturity, instability, etc.

The lack of supervision by the family, as well as by another appropriate institutional form for the development, upbringing, and education of the child, leads to the free organization of free time by the young person. In order to achieve the effect of proper development and upbringing of children, there needs to be the creation of an organized system of activities in which children can engage and be entertained, in order to prevent them from directing their free time towards destructive behavior and undertaking criminal activities.

The influence of the mass media on children is very significant. Through the media and the content they provide, children receive a range of educational, informative, and significant information. With the opportunity to process that information quickly, they can gain knowledge and an idea of issues that directly interest them. However, in addition to the positive side, the media can also negatively affect the development of children, most often by presenting violent behavior, criminality, and promoting an easy life without work. An additional problem arises when changes occur in the psychophysical development of children, which is inevitable in the natural process of growth (Singer, G.D. Singer, L.J, 2001).

The existence of a significant correlation between alcohol and crime has long been recognized in scientific literature; however, the dynamics of this relationship and its temporal ordering remain unclear (Graham, West, 2001). Alcoholism, or alcohol consumption among young people, has a pronounced and great influence on them, leading to actions that can be subsumed under the general concept of juvenile delinquency. When considering the problem of alcoholism among children and young people, the fact that several significant factors contribute to the development of alcoholism in these individuals should be emphasized. These factors include adolescence as a developmental period, the family, peers, and the conditions in the wider social environment.

In the modern world, drug addiction is a special socio-pathological phenomenon and a specific form of alienation among young people who fail to adapt and find their way in the environmental conditions prevailing in the world. Adolescence is characterized by many crises, turmoil, problems, rebellion, a mismatch between desires and opportunities, and a mismatch between psychosocial and physical development. The marginalized role of the family exacerbates this situation. The drug mafia, with its large supply of drugs, exacerbates the spread of this phenomenon in Western countries and those in transition. One explanation ties drug abuse to poverty, social disorganization, and hopelessness. Drug use by young people in minority groups has been tied to factors such as racial prejudice, low self-esteem, and poor socioeconomic status. International research suggests that drug use is equally entwined within the dynamics of juvenile crime as it is with adult crime. Compared with other juveniles, young offenders tend to begin abusing substances at an earlier age, use a greater variety of substances, and abuse them more frequently (Prochard, Payne, 2005).

Prostitution is a socio-pathological phenomenon that is not only characteristic of modern living conditions; on the contrary, it has been present since the earliest periods of human society. Prostitution consists of the performance of illicit sexual acts with persons on a commercial basis. A special problem within the framework of prostitution is the exploitation of children for participation in these sexual activities. Child prostitution, along with child pornography, represents one of the worst forms of child labor, and the most severe exploitation and abuse of children.

Gambling is another socio-pathological phenomenon that negatively affects the general development of children. Gambling is considered to be one of the oldest and most widespread human activities, consisting of playing for money or other valuables based on certain rules in the form of betting, with the desire to win something. Gambling is simultaneously considered both a game and deviant behavior. It leads to numerous negative consequences—personal, family, and social—because it consumes large amounts of money and greatly endangers the family budget. Gambling is also closely linked to crime. Given these claims about gambling, it becomes clear that children must be protected from activities undertaken under the guise of gambling.

Vagrancy and begging are serious negative phenomena closely linked to crime and other socio-pathological behaviors. Both vagrancy and begging show a type of expansion that should certainly be an alarm for the state apparatus to solve these problems. We often witness the phenomenon of "street children"—those left without family care and protection and exposed to various forms of abuse and exploitation.

Criminogenic factors that are endogenous in nature are internal and related to the personality of the child who appears as a perpetrator of juvenile delinquency. Within this group of criminogenic factors, the following can be emphasized: the child's intelligence, temperament, character, emotions, acquired habits, attitudes, understandings, as well as the child's physiological and biological characteristics.

The concept of intelligence refers to the ability to navigate new situations through thinking, or the ability to solve problems through cognitive processes. Supporters of intelligence theory argue that low intelligence in a person can very easily lead to conflict with the law and the commission of criminal acts. Children are born with certain innate reactions to the world around them, such as objects and people, which is known as temperament. Adults also exhibit temperament, but it becomes intertwined with life experience, forming the personality. Temperament is a stable tendency toward specific emotional manifestations and moods. Many believe that temperament traits are largely determined by heredity. Therefore, temperament represents how individuals react to external stimuli and their intrapsychic life.

Character is the sum of psychological traits that characterize a person and influence their behavior. It can also refer to volitional or cognitive qualities like perseverance, determination, initiative, etc. Character traits are associated with moral principles, such as honesty, selflessness, modesty, and conscientiousness. Character and character traits can also relate to criminal behavior. Criminological research has observed that criminals tend to possess traits such as primitivism, egoism, egocentricity, maliciousness, rigidity, aggression, and perversion. In delinquent children, the following characteristics are emphasized: difficulty establishing a sense of identity, sexual maladjustment, peer insecurity, self-devaluation, non-acceptance of one's own body, social insensitivity, and family disagreements.

Socio-emotional development is the process through which children acquire the capacity to understand, experience, express, and manage emotions, as well as develop relationships with others. In many families,

expressing emotions results in either ignoring or ridiculing the child. It is essential for parents to appropriately respond to the emotions of their children. For instance, sadness should evoke sympathy, anger should provoke attention and responsibility, and fear requires protective action.

Tendencies and habits have exceptional criminogenic significance. A habit is a human tendency to behave the same way in similar circumstances, while a tendency is the inclination to act similarly when faced with analogous situations. These psychological factors, especially in recidivists, play an important role in predicting criminal behavior.

The influence of biological and physiological characteristics on juvenile delinquency is especially notable in adolescence, where rapid physical and psychological changes occur. These changes can lead to a mismatch between physical and psychological maturation, often resulting in violence, sexual offenses, or other harmful consequences for both the victim and the perpetrator, as well as society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Juvenile delinquency, as a form of prohibited behavior, possesses its own unique characteristic: the perpetrators are children. In this context, children engage in actions that are deemed illegal, which is why this type of behavior demands special attention. The study of juvenile delinquency is driven by the fact that children—the most vulnerable group in society—can become involved in illegal activities such as misdemeanors and crimes. Their vulnerability and their role as the future of every society make it even more important for both the general public and professionals to investigate the root causes of juvenile delinquency.

The focus of professional discussions surrounding this issue is primarily on creating systems that can prevent various manifestations of juvenile delinquency, ultimately protecting children from harm.

By identifying the causes of juvenile delinquency, we can pinpoint the underlying problems and sources of crime and delinquency. The range of factors influencing children to engage in delinquent behavior is broad, both direct and indirect. A thorough and accurate understanding of these causes is crucial for forming an effective prevention system to combat this societal issue. Properly determining the causes of juvenile delinquency also guides states in shaping their preventive measures and deciding where to take action, with the goal of eliminating or at least minimizing these unlawful behaviors.

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