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The Role of the Criminal Composition of the Neighborhood in Juvenile Delinquency – A Case Study in Neighborhood of Sibous, Annaba

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Abstract:
This study aims to examine the community of the neighborhood as a social concept and its role in producing delinquent behavior, showing how it affects juvenile delinquency. It explores the impact of the lack of ethics, social values, and standards within the neighborhood, its relation to juvenile delinquency, and the role of negative peer groups in fostering delinquent behavior among juveniles through a field study conducted in the "Sibous" neighborhood in Annaba.

Keywords: Crime, neighborhood, juvenile, juvenile delinquency, peer Groups, values, social norms**.**

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I-Introduction:

In contemporary society, the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency has added new dimensions and indicators of civilization with significant risks. It is closely tied to the culture of society and highlights the decline in the effectiveness of key social institutions responsible for nurturing young individuals and shaping their behavior (Ghalal Abdul Khaleq & Sayyid Ramadan, 2000). Juvenile delinquency is one form of deviant or criminal behavior that has affected human societies historically and in modern times, regardless of differences in nature, size, or structure. Despite advancements in global development and contributions from scholars across various fields studying crime and deviance, efforts to address this issue through legal and scientific means remain insufficient (Cohen, 1959; Merton, 1961).

The Chicago School of Geography, led by Quetelet and other scholars, focused on studying the types of crimes committed according to geographic regions, particularly in neighborhoods of Chicago (El-Fayruzabadi, 1997). Ecology is one of the main contributions of the Chicago School to sociology, especially in the fields of crime and social deviance (Creswell, 2014).

According to Clifford Shaw's research, which addressed the relationship between neighborhoods and juvenile delinquency, the neighborhood plays a major role in fostering crime or delinquency (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Shaw described this neighborhood as being highly disorganized socially, with a corrupt environment encouraging criminal behavior among siblings with long criminal histories. It is known that a juvenile's personality is shaped through two roles:

1. Their role within their immediate neighborhood.
2. The status of their neighborhood relative to others and its role in the larger society.

When a neighborhood deviates from established social norms, it becomes a source of harmful tendencies, failing to guide juveniles toward positive values and behaviors. This misalignment places juveniles in situations leading to delinquency and crime.

Based on the above, the problem can be defined at the level of the field study conducted in the "Sibous" neighborhood, focusing on the role of its criminal composition in juvenile delinquency. This raises the following central question: **What is the role of the criminal composition of the neighborhood in juvenile delinquency?**

Subsidiary questions include:

- Does the absence of ethics, values, and social norms within the neighborhood lead to juvenile delinquency?
- Do negative peer groups within the neighborhood play a role in juvenile delinquency?

II- Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the impact of the absence of ethics, values, and social norms within the neighborhood and its relationship to juvenile delinquency.
2. To examine the role of negative peer groups within the neighborhood in juvenile delinquency.

III- Importance of the Study

Juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood forms a secondary society on the fringes of mainstream society, associated with various problems, undesirable effects, and poor backgrounds. This makes it a social issue worthy of research and investigation. Juvenile delinquency is essentially a social product influenced by collective and ecological conditions—environmental and cultural factors—that hinder juveniles' ability to adapt to societal expectations and environmental influences (Ghalal Tharwat, 1983).

The importance lies in the fact that these delinquent juveniles could become adult criminals in the future if left without intervention, protection, or guidance. Therefore, addressing this issue is crucial to prevent future harm to society.

IV- Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworkm

1- Basic Conceptsm

- **Crime**

  Linguistically: In Arabic, "jarima" refers to wrongdoing or sin. Etymologically, it means committing an offense (Ibn Manzour, 1988).

  Sociologically: Crime is defined as any act or omission that violates societal values and disrupts social harmony. It is antisocial behavior that breaches social norms and rules (Ghalal Abdul Khaleq & Sayyid Ramadan, 2000).

- **Neighborhood**

  Sociologically: The neighborhood is the social environment surrounding an individual from birth until adulthood. It can be viewed from two perspectives:

  - Morphological: Refers to its layout, design, structure, and planning.
  - Physiological: Pertains to human and social interactions within the neighborhood, shaped by morphological and ecological factors (Rossi, 1982).

According to contemporary Italian architect Aldo Rossi, the neighborhood is a morphological and structural unit characterized by an urban character, social content, and specific function (Rossi, 1982).

- **Operational Definition of Criminal Composition:**

  It refers to the social space or environment composed of ecological and geographical aspects, geographically defined (e.g., Sibous neighborhood). It leaves a lasting imprint on the personality and mindset of juveniles, often leading to criminal behavior such as theft, robbery, violence, drug use, and other antisocial activities.

- **Juvenile Delinquency**

  Linguistically: The term "delinquency" or "deviance" is synonymous with the French word "délinquance," referring to any behavior that violates social and legal norms in a particular society.
  Sociologically:

- Albert Cohen (1959) defines delinquent behavior as actions that contradict expectations legitimized by social institutions and systems.
- Robert Merton (1961) describes delinquent behavior as actions that visibly deviate from the standards established for people under certain social conditions.

➢ **Juvenile:**

Linguistically: The term "juvenile" in Arabic means "young" and corresponds to the French term "mineur" and the English term "minor," referring to a child or youth, male or female.

Legally: Juveniles are defined as individuals between the ages of 14 (the age of discernment) and 18 (adolescence or adulthood). Article 442 of the Algerian Penal Procedure Code sets the minimum age for juveniles at 18 years.

Operationally: Juvenile delinquency refers to behavior exhibited by minors aged between 14 (age of discernment) and 18 (adolescence or adulthood), who have not yet matured intellectually, psychologically, or socially. Their health, morals, and upbringing make them vulnerable to risks, delinquency, and deviance within the neighborhood.

2-Supporting Concepts:

1. **Peer Groups:**

Sociologically: A peer group is a social network formed by individuals of similar age, interests, and backgrounds. They share common factors and motivations, forming distinct groups separate from the family. Research shows that juveniles often adopt models they admire, absorbing traits and characteristics from them (Talaat Mohamed Issa et al., 1962). Guidance from parents in selecting friends plays a critical role, as wrong friendships frequently lead to delinquent behavior.

Operationally: Peer groups consist of friends who share similar ages, inclinations, identities, and patterns of thought. These groups influence the social behavior, values, norms, and attitudes of juveniles within the neighborhood (Sibous/Annaba).

2. **Values:**

Operationally: Values are clear or implicit conceptions represented by juveniles within the neighborhood, guiding their behavior and enabling them to choose legitimate or illegitimate means to achieve their goals.

3. **Social Norms:**

Operationally: Social norms are principles and ideas governing juveniles' responses and behaviors within the neighborhood. They serve as general behavioral guidelines, determining whether actions are accepted or rejected by society.

V- Previous Studies:

- Ali Bouenaq (1987): Conducted a comparative study in Constantine examining unplanned neighborhoods and their psychological and social impacts on juveniles. The study revealed that unstable family environments and inadequate housing conditions significantly contributed to juvenile delinquency.

- Abed Mehaoub (2004–2005): Investigated the social issues prevalent in marginalized neighborhoods, particularly juvenile delinquency. Using surveys, he identified key characteristics of these neighborhoods, such as socioeconomic disparities and cultural conflicts.

VI- Theoretical Approaches:

1. **Ecological Theories**
    - Burgess and Park's Central City Model.
    - Shaw and McKay's Theory of Social Disorganization.
    - Cultural Transition Theory.
2. **Social Theories**
    - Durkheim's Theory of Anomie.
    - Merton's Theory of Social Structure and Anomie.
    - Sutherland's Differential Association Theory.
    - Thrasher's Gang Theory.
    - Cohen's Subcultural Theory.
    - Labeling Theory.

VII-Methodology:

1. **Case Study Approach**

    We adopted the case study method, focusing on in-depth analysis of specific cases to draw broader conclusions. This approach allowed us to focus on four cases exhibiting primary deviance, residing in the Sibous neighborhood (Hasan, 1980).

2. **Data Collection Tools**
    - **Participant Observation** : Direct observation of daily life in the target population or group (e.g., village, association, etc.) to gather qualitative information about behaviors and situations (Kachroud, 2007).
    - **Free Individual Interviews** : Conducted between the researcher and participants individually to foster rapport and encourage open expression (Angers, 2006).
3. **Study Population**

The study population consisted of four cases exhibiting primary deviance, residing in the Sibous neighborhood, through a series of in-depth questions.

VIII- Results and Discussion:

Through in-depth analysis of the cases, we answered the subsidiary questions as follows:

Subsidiary Question 1: Does the absence of ethics, social values, and social norms within the neighborhood lead to juvenile delinquency?

- The lack of proper ecological specifications, including planning and infrastructure standards, resulted in the disappearance of social values and norms (Maxwell, 2013).
- The Sibous neighborhood is undergoing a cultural transition, leading to social disorganization and cultural shifts .
- Cultural mixing and ethnic heterogeneity caused value conflicts and clashes between social principles and ethics.
- Lack of social cohesion and integration led to imbalance within the Sibous community.
- The geographical and ecological isolation of Sibous made it unstable, disrupting social relationships among its residents.
- Proximity to Annaba city center created routine social dynamics.
- The absence of legitimate means to achieve goals drove juveniles toward illegitimate methods, resulting in delinquency.
- The emergence of social representations encouraging imitation of criminal personalities contributed to delinquent behavior.

Subsidiary Question 2: Do negative peer groups play a role in juvenile delinquency?

- The absence of direct communication channels within the Sibous neighborhood led to social disorganization, resulting in the formation of deviant gangs adopting professional criminal behavior (Thrasher, 1927).
- Deviant behaviors such as drug trafficking and use, alcohol consumption, fighting, and violence emerged due to interaction with negative peer groups and learning through maladaptive socialization (Sutherland, 1939).
- Characteristics of deviant personalities included masculinity, excitement, and independence, stemming from group identity (peer groups) and cultural representations. Skills and innovation were acquired through association with deviant groups, driven by shared goals leading to professionalized deviance.
- Juveniles were labeled as delinquent by the Sibous community based on their deviant cultural practices.

Clifford Shaw described neighborhoods as social environments or zones of delinquency, characterized by social disorganization and a corrupt environment encouraging crime. Our field study in Sibous confirmed Shaw's hypothesis, as the ecological and social factors align closely with his description and analysis (Shaw & McKay, 1942). The Sibous neighborhood respects criminals and assigns them traits of masculinity and heroism in many cases.

Social factors such as the absence of social control, awareness, and social conscience have led to the erosion of values, ethics, and norms, resulting in class differences and widespread cultural models. Consequently, the Sibous neighborhood cannot be considered part of the broader civil

society of Annaba but exists on its margins, as concluded by previous studies like those of Hassan Al-Saati. Juveniles migrating from impoverished urban areas (e.g., cases 1 and 3) contribute to the spread of deviance, as seen in the transfer of a juvenile from Didoche Merad to Sibous.

Thrasher's theory confirms that deviant gangs arise from socially disorganized environments where living conditions are deteriorating. Interviews with the head of the urban police station in Sibous and case studies validated this theory. Similarly, Albert Cohen's theory of deviant subcultures explains how lower-class juveniles develop unique values, norms, and skills, forming gangs that compete for social status within the neighborhood.

Miller adds that socialization methods for lower-class individuals instill traits like masculinity, excitement, and independence, manifesting in violent and drug-related behaviors. The transmission of common cultural models and deviant subcultures has led to increased deviant behavior within the neighborhood, consistent with the theories of Cohen, Shaw, and McKay.

Conclusions

Through what we have discussed, it is evident that the Sibous neighborhood, given its geographical and ecological context, qualifies as a disadvantaged area in terms of living standards and social mentality .As noted by Ali Bouenaq in his study, the Sibous neighborhood is geographically isolated from neighboring areas due to barriers such as proximity to Annaba Port, ASMEDAL Company, and the railway line. This isolation was confirmed through field research using free individual interviews with the head of the urban police station in Sibous.

Lack of social balance and dysfunction within the institutions of the Sibous neighborhood, caused by the weakening or absence of social values and norms, has led to the adoption of illegitimate means to achieve material success, consistent with Durkheim's theory of anomie and Merton's theory of social structure and anomie.

1. Importance of Social Environment: A supportive environment inside and outside prisons helps reduce recidivism rates.
2. Effectiveness of Preventive Programs: Early prevention is more effective than late intervention, emphasizing the need for strategies targeting youth before they engage in crime.
3. Education as a Protective Factor: Higher education contributes to developing social and cognitive skills that reduce the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities.
4. Role of Security Policies: Integrated policies involving cooperation between security agencies and communities are more successful in combating terrorism and organized crime.
5. Economic Factors: Poverty and unemployment are catalysts for crime but should be addressed alongside economic interventions and social support programs.

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