Psychosocial Care for Adolescents: Between Developmental Complexities and Environmental Pressures

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Abstract :
Adolescence is a transitional phase that encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. During this stage, adolescents face various daily stressful situations, some of which they avoid, while others they navigate depending on their cognitive abilities and resources. Adolescents undergo a series of physiological changes alongside continuous psychological and social development, which involve numerous pressures arising from bodily transformations and their psychological and social needs. These factors influence their behavior, guided by a specific social standard that requires cognitive and effective abilities for adaptation and adjustment. In many cases, the inability to use effective problem-solving methods can lead to behavioral issues that negatively impact both the individual and society.

***Key Words*:** Adolescence, Phycological problems, Social problems

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Introduction:

Adolescence is a stage of physical, mental, emotional, and social transition, where the adolescent faces various daily stressful situations. Some of these situations are avoided, while others are dealt with according to their cognitive abilities and resources. During this phase, the adolescent undergoes a series of physiological changes, along with continuous psychological and social development, which entails numerous pressures resulting from bodily transformations and psychological and social needs that influence their behavior. This is guided by a specific social standard that requires cognitive and effective abilities for adjustment and adaptation. The inability to use effective problem-solving methods can, in many cases, lead to behavioral issues that negatively affect both the individual and society.

Therefore, it is crucial during this stage of growth to educate and guide the adolescent towards a healthy direction that helps them cope with daily life demands and overcome the crises they face. This stage represents a significant transformation in the life of the adolescent, who becomes an active and influential member of society. It is during this time that their habits, values, and life standards are formed.

I. The Concept of Adolescence

In this section, we will present the operational concept of adolescence from a social perspective.

Adolescence is often seen as a critical phase in an individual's life, marked by physical, mental, and emotional development. The adolescent transitions from a stage where they depend on familial upbringing, relying on their parents to acquire behaviors and mannerisms, into a phase where they become more self-reliant. During this stage, they shift from being primarily engaged with their family to interacting with their broader social circle, including peers in the neighborhood, schoolmates, and others.

Social interaction plays a vital role in the development of the individual. It contributes to the formation of behaviors and personality traits, and it is essential for the creation of groups and the emergence of leadership. Social interaction serves as a means of communication between individuals, where every action has a corresponding reaction, thus fostering interaction (Salim, Abdel-Aati & Ezz El-Din, 2019, pp. 200-280).

Therefore, adolescents often find themselves within groups that share specific behaviors, habits, values, and traditions. These groups allow for the exchange of ideas and decisions, and within them, leadership skills and personal qualities may emerge. The interactions within these groups can either have a positive or negative influence on the individuals involved.

For the adolescent, these social groups offer a sense of psychological relief, freeing them from the constraints imposed by their family, which can lead to conflicts with parents. In these groups, adolescents may adopt new behaviors either positive, such as discipline and good morals, or negative, such as isolation, disturbances, and deviance.

Social and psychological problems refer to the challenges an individual faces in their daily life. While these problems may not reach the level of mental illness, it is crucial to address and resolve them before they become complicated and unmanageable. These issues can hinder an individual's ability to achieve social goals. Social problems are essentially disruptions or tensions that an individual experiences, which can negatively affect societal structures and cause social maladjustment.

II. Developmental Issues in Adolescence

During this phase of rapid growth, adolescents face a variety of psychological and social issues that disrupt their psychological and social harmony. These issues often include motor coordination problems, difficulty controlling their voice, emotional disharmony, feelings of arrogance, sexual deviations, and behavioral deviations, among others. Below, we will explore some of the key psychological and social developmental issues faced by adolescents:

1. Social Issues Facing Adolescents

Many studies and research related to adolescence highlight this phase as one characterized by intense anxiety and fear. These emotions dominate the adolescent's life, making them feel as though they are in a world different from both childhood and adulthood. These studies show that the sources of discomfort span various aspects of their life and thoughts. Some of the main social and psychological problems include:

1.1. Personality Issues:

Adolescents often experience feelings of inferiority, lack of responsibility, low self-esteem, and a constant fear of disrespect from others. They may also suffer from chronic anxiety, excessive arguing, fear of ridicule and criticism, and daydreaming.

1.2. Family-Related Issues:

Lack of privacy within the home and the inability to be alone in a personal space can exacerbate an adolescent's distress. Additionally, the presence of barriers between the adolescent and their parents often prevents open communication about their emotional and psychological struggles. Frequent arguments with siblings and being treated as a child by parents can also limit their freedom of movement and choices in friends and social groups.

1.3. Issues Related to Social Status:

Adolescents may struggle with fear of social interaction and the inability to integrate into broader society. They worry about not fitting in and feel restricted to the childhood environment controlled by their parents. Adolescents are often highly concerned about their external appearance, especially in terms of clothing, as they believe these affect how their peers perceive them (Claire, n.d, p. 19).

The nature of the adolescent's relationship with their peers differs from their relationship with family members. Family relationships are obligatory and constant, while friendships are voluntary and can change over time. Peer relationships offer adolescents opportunities to assume new roles and engage in new behavioral patterns.

1.4. Internal Conflict:

Adolescents often experience several internal conflicts, the most significant of which include the struggle between seeking independence from the family and relying on it, the conflict between the remnants of childhood and the demands of masculinity or femininity, and the tension between their excessive ambitions and their apparent shortcomings in fulfilling commitments. They also grapple with the clash between their inner desires and societal traditions, the religious conflict between the rituals, principles, and beliefs they learned in childhood and their new critical perspective on life, and the cultural struggle between their generation's ideas and opinions and those of the previous generation.

Social expert Dr. Al-Majdoub highlights some of the common problems associated with adolescence, such as: "sexual deviations, same-sex attraction, delinquency, poor adjustment to the environment, and juvenile delinquency including assault, theft, and running away." He notes that these deviations often arise due to the adolescent's lack of affection, care, and attention at home and school, failure to meet their emotional needs, and a lack of religious guidance.

He further explains that adolescence, with its characteristics and challenges, is the most dangerous turning point in the lives of young people. The primary risks adolescents face during this phase include: "loss of identity and belonging, lack of a clear goal, value contradictions, and the problem of emptiness."

Studies conducted in America on sexual minorities showed that a lack of the father's role in the family, with the mother assuming both parental roles, resulted in these adolescents developing stronger associations with females (their mothers, sisters) than with males. This lack of paternal involvement had a significant impact on their sexual deviance (Majdoub, 2019).

2. Psychological Issues Facing Adolescents

During adolescence, individuals experience a wide range of emotional and psychological challenges, including:

2.1. Emotional and Economic Growth:

During this stage, adolescents work on achieving self-identity to prove to others that they are no longer children. As part of this process, they may criticize certain behaviors around them and strive to use their abilities in more mature and complex ways. They aim to build relationships with others, trust them, and discern what benefits or harms them. A teenager's rejection of parental or familial interference is natural at this stage. Often, adolescents display an aversion to associating with certain individuals known for deviant behavior, even if they agree with their family's perspective. They perceive such interference as undermining their independence.

Furthermore, adolescents in this phase seek financial independence and make efforts to rely on themselves. The economic factor significantly influences the adolescent's psychological and social behavior, especially in the absence of Islamic upbringing, which instills contentment and satisfaction in individuals' hearts.

2.2. Psychological Changes:

Adolescence is marked by a critical period of psychological changes, which is a natural result of the interplay of energies, tendencies, and abilities that shape the adolescent's personality.

Among these changes is emotional volatility, where adolescents may become easily angered or upset over trivial matters. This emotional state is characterized by mood swings and rapid changes. Adolescents often want to prove to others that they are no longer children, asserting their independence, opinions, and personalities. They become particularly sensitive and may react strongly to even the smallest provocation.

Additionally, some common behaviors that may emerge include rebellion, disobedience, withdrawal from social life, reluctance to interact with others, and fear of socializing. These behaviors are often a response to the growing sense of identity and autonomy that characterizes adolescence. It's also worth noting that the self-love emotion is one of the strongest feelings during this stage, as adolescents focus intensely on their physical appearance and strive to adopt qualities that will attract the attention of others (Al-Abdullah, n.d, pp. 9-16).

2.3. Introversion and Isolation:

Adolescents often tend toward introversion and isolation during this period, meaning they become more focused on their private and inner lives. The reasons for introversion in adolescence are often rooted in familial factors, such as a lack of understanding from parents regarding the adolescent's desires and needs, or neglect due to their parental obligations. Introversion is viewed as a way for adolescents to cope with the anxiety they feel in social situations (Al-Ashwal, n.d. pp. 58-81), as it allows them to avoid a society that, for them, is full of disruptive and distressing factors.

An adolescent may adopt this behavior after repeated failure in social interactions. An isolated adolescent may have encountered constant rejection and frustration in dealing with society. Furthermore, positive strategies they may have attempted to use to restore harmony and alignment with society have failed (Abdullah Al-Subaiti, 2024, p. 91).

III. Manifestations of Deviance During Adolescence

The manifestations of deviance during adolescence vary and multiply, as they change from one period to another due to environmental and social changes and their mechanisms. Among these manifestations, we find:

1. Violence and Aggression:

Sociologists believe that the causes of violence and aggression stem from the adolescent's desire for fame among peers, as well as an attempt to assert oneself in front of the opposite sex. Adolescents often believe that violence is a way to solve problems with others. Thus, reducing violent behavior requires changing adolescents' mindsets and ways of thinking regarding the concept of violence. In 1995, James Fox (G. FOX), Dean of the College of Criminal Justice in Atlanta, attributed responsibility for juvenile delinquency to the family, as families today

have become preoccupied with work and other life matters, neglecting their children (Ibrahim, 2002, p. 36).

2. Theft:

Theft is defined as an anti-social act taking a measurable item unlawfully and secretly. When a young child (in early childhood) takes items such as toys, papers, etc., this does not place them in the circle of deviance, because at this stage they do not understand the meaning of theft. If the child is not guided using proper methods and healthy socialization, and is instead reinforced through inappropriate socialization methods by receiving praise and approval for such behavior, this positive reinforcement strengthens their perceptions and attitudes toward theft, eventually becoming a core component of their personality.

Therefore, the family must guide the adolescent's behavior toward eliminating criminal tendencies and aggressive behaviors that reflect in their conduct. This can be achieved by instilling religious and moral values, teaching the child or adolescent how to cope with problems and solve them, and meeting their needs through appropriate and healthy methods that correspond to their developmental stage. Furthermore, parents should monitor their children's behavior without making them feel monitored, and guide them in choosing and interacting with their friends (Al-Shahrani, 2004, p. 102).

The patterns of theft among this age group may change depending on each adolescent's needs on one hand, and social and cultural changes on the other.

3. Drug Use in Its Various Forms and Smoking:

The phenomenon of drug use and smoking is considered one of the most common problems among adolescents. It has become one of the most significant issues affecting societies worldwide, prompting an urgent call for action to address and resolve it by raising awareness among this age group and strengthening the role of social institutions and civil society.

The degree of their impact on consciousness varies, knowing that the danger lies in the individual's inability to control and regulate their own behavior. Drug use causes the adolescent to lose rational judgment and clear thinking, which may push them to engage in deviant or anti-social behaviors.

Drug use is one of the motives that fuel criminal tendencies. Studies and statistics have shown that crime rates are continuously increasing as a result of drug consumption. Drug and hallucinogen use often leads to the commission of crimes, as the adolescent resorts to any means necessary to obtain them. This exposes them to the realm of crime and deviance, such as theft, fraud, deception, violence, aggression, and other forms of delinquency and criminal behavior (Rashwan, 2005, p. 68).

IV. Social and Psychological Care in Adolescence

The interventions aimed at enhancing mental health and preventing disorders focus on strengthening an individual's ability to manage their emotions, improving alternatives to risky behaviors, building resilience in handling difficult situations and hardships, and fostering supportive social environments and networks.

- Maintaining open and continuous communication with the adolescent by discussing your own fears and experiences from adolescence. This can help alleviate their concerns and increase their awareness that what they are going through is normal.
- Paying close attention to the adolescent's behavior, both at home and in school, as adolescence is a transitional phase, and changes in behavior can be sudden, dramatic, or sharp.

These programs require a multi-level approach involving various platforms to deliver messages, such as digital media, healthcare or social institutions, schools, or the local community. Additionally, a variety of strategies are needed to engage adolescents, especially those who are at higher risk (World Health Organization, 2024).

- Providing support to the adolescent in school by capitalizing on students' interest in group work and encouraging them to take on responsibilities and engage in healthy competition.
- The family should surround the adolescent with care, encouraging activities that require their involvement with the family, and ensuring they have personal time to avoid feeling restricted.
- Avoid direct and repeated criticism of the adolescent, instead, attempt to correct their behavior through guidance and advice.
- Surround the adolescent with love, affection, and attention, but without overdoing it.
- Provide therapeutic interventions, including medication, if necessary, along with psychological care to help alleviate their stress.

Conclusion:

The adolescent phase is a transitional period where an individual moves from being dependent on their parents to becoming an independent and responsible person. It is also characterized by physiological and emotional changes, making it a critical and anxious phase in life, filled with various problems, including social and psychological issues.

Due to the significance of this phase in shaping the adolescent's personality and modifying their behavior, it is essential to provide them with proper attention, privacy, and guidance. Encouraging them to engage in group work, collaborate with others, and motivating them will help them navigate this stage smoothly.

Therefore, the adolescent should be surrounded by care and support to prevent them from engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as deviations and self-harm, which may disrupt the social fabric and public order.

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