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The Role of Religious Education in Modifying Deviant Behaviors Against Parents: A Qualitative Field Study of Cases from Al-Widad Association in Khemis Miliana

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Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the role of religious education in modifying deviant behaviors directed against parents within the Algerian family context. It employs a qualitative field study design based on the case study method. The sample consisted of five cases (males and females) from residents of the Shelter and Solidarity Center at Al-Widad Association in the city of Khemis Miliana. The study utilized a descriptive-analytical approach and semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool, grounded in Social Control Theory and Religious Socialization Theory. The results indicated a positive correlation between the absence of sound religious education in childhood and the intensification of deviant behaviors against parents. Conversely, acquired religious practices (whether in childhood or adulthood) contributed to mitigating deviance and reinforcing the value of parents. The study confirmed that religious education alone is insufficient without a stable family environment; however, it remains a protective and behavioral modifying factor through mechanisms of "Internal Control" and "Religious Adaptation".

Keywords: : Religious Education ; Deviant Behavior ; Parents ; Case Study ; Social Control ; Al-Widad Association.

Introduction

The family constitutes the fundamental unit of socialization, and religious education plays a pivotal role in instilling moral values and regulating behavior, as indicated by Structural Functionalism theories which view religion as a factor for social cohesion (Durkheim, 1912). However, contemporary societies are witnessing a rise in rates of deviance directed against parents (undutifulness, violence, abandonment), raising questions regarding the effectiveness of the religious deterrent amidst social and economic variables and the disintegration of family bonds

The significance of this study stems from an attempt to monitor the impact of the religious variable on deviant behavior through the field reality of cases suffering from family disintegration or deviance. This is conducted within the framework of a sociological research project at Al-Widad Association in Khemis Miliana. The study problem revolves around the main question: To what extent does religious education contribute to modifying deviant behaviors against parents and protecting them?

THE FIRST TOPIC : THEORETICAL ASPECT OF THE STUDY

First requirement: Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The selection of this topic was based on a set of scientific and field considerations, summarized in the following points:

.Observed Field Reality: Through presence in the research field at Al-Widad Association in Khemis Miliana, an increase was observed in cases of youth admitted who suffer from estrangement from family or aggressive behaviors against parents, necessitating a research stance to understand the hidden causes behind this.

.Local Research Gap: There is a scarcity of Algerian sociological studies that qualitatively link "acquired religious education" with "behavior modification against parents" within the context of shelter associations, as most studies focus solely on security or psychological aspects.

.Apparent Contradiction: Exploratory interviews revealed cases that received religious education yet deviated (e.g., Case 03), and cases deprived of it whose deviance was more severe (e.g., Case 04). This raises scientific curiosity regarding intervening variables (such as family violence and poverty).

.Societal Importance: The severity of the phenomenon of "undutifulness to parents" in Algerian Islamic culture, as it represents a violation of religious and social constants, makes researching methods to modify it a moral and scientific priority.

second requirement: Significance of the Study

This study holds great importance on two levels, theoretical and practical:

Theoretical Significance: The study contributes to enriching the knowledge base in the Sociology of Religion and the Sociology of Deviance by testing "Social Control Theory" (Hirschi, 1969) and "Religious Socialization Theory" (Berger, 1967) in a local Algerian social environment, adding a cultural dimension to these theories.

Practical Significance:

For Pastoral Institutions: Providing Al-Widad Association and similar institutions with field results to help design rehabilitation programs that integrate the spiritual-religious dimension with social support.

For the Algerian Family: Raising awareness among parents that religious education does not mean severity, but rather an interactive relationship that protects against deviance, as clearly appeared in cases of regret among respondents.

For Policymakers: Highlighting the role of charitable associations as a strategic partner in social protection for juveniles and deviants who have lost family care.

Third requirement: Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify the Nature of the Relationship: Between the level of acquired religious education (in childhood or adulthood) and the degree of deviance against parents among the study sample.
2. Analyze Mechanisms: Upon which religious education relies to modify behavior (such as fear of God, regret, religious peer pressure).
3. Monitor Intervening Variables: Such as (death of parents, family violence, poverty) on the effectiveness of religious education in preventing deviance.
4. Provide Practical Recommendations: To enhance the role of religious and associative institutions in protecting parents from undutifulness by children, based on data from field cases (01-05).

Fourth requirement: Conceptual Framework

To analyze the phenomenon accurately, this study relies on three interconnected core concepts.

1- Deviant Behavior: is defined as actions violating prevailing social and religious norms (Merton, 1938). Within the family context, deviance against parents manifests in a spectrum ranging from verbal disrespect and financial neglect to physical violence and abandonment. This constitutes a severe breach of sacred religious and social controls, known as "Uquq", which is stigmatized heavily in Islamic culture. Such behavior destabilizes the family structure, which is the foundational unit of society.

2- Religious Education and Socialization: refers to the process whereby individuals acquire beliefs, values, and practices through family and religious institutions (Berger, 1967). Beyond mere ritualistic practice, religious education functions as a mechanism for "Internal Control". Here, the individual refrains from deviance not solely due to fear of external legal punishment, but out of a profound sense of divine surveillance (Monitoring) and the internalized value of spiritual reward and punishment. This internalization transforms religious norms into personal conscience, guiding behavior even without external monitoring.

3- Social Bond Theory: posits that the strength of an individual's bond to conventional society prevents deviance (Hirschi, 1969). This bond comprises attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. In this study, "Religious Commitment" represents a critical dimension of this bond. It enhances the youth's emotional attachment to their parents as a religious duty, thereby increasing the social and spiritual cost of harming them. Consequently, a strong religious bond

acts as a buffer, reducing the likelihood of abusive behaviors by reinforcing intergenerational respect and moral obligation. In the Al-Widad Association context, these frameworks show how programs leverage religious bonds to restore ties.

Fifth requirement: Methodology

This study adopted the "Descriptive-Analytical Method" as the main methodological framework, due to its superior ability to describe the social phenomenon as it exists in the field reality accurately, and to analyze its psychological, social, and religious dimensions in depth. The study did not suffice with superficial description; rather, it analyzed causal relationships between variables, specifically the interactive relationship between acquired religious education and deviant behavior directed against parents. This allows for an understanding of the hidden mechanisms behind behavioral modification and the role of intervening variables such as family violence or poverty.

Regarding the "Research Design", the "Case Study" method was used, which is the most appropriate for delving deep and accessing rich qualitative data and understanding the complex individual contexts of each respondent (Yin, 2018). This method allowed for the reconstruction of the personal history of each case and understanding their path of deviance from childhood to the present moment, enhancing the internal validity of the study and allowing for analytical generalization of results to similar cases.

As for the "Data Collection Tool", the study relied on "Semi-structured Interviews" with respondents. This provided great flexibility in asking questions and inquiring about sensitive emotional and religious details that closed questionnaires usually do not reveal, while ensuring an atmosphere of trust during the dialogue. Additionally, "Direct Observation" of respondents' behaviors during meetings was relied upon.

Study Population and Sample The population consisted of visitors to the Shelter and Solidarity Center at Al-Widad Association in Khemis Miliana, as it is an environment hosting this category and a center for rehabilitation. A "purposive non-random sample" consisting of 5 social cases (3 males, 2 females) was selected, all of whom had recorded deviant behaviors against parents or were exposed to them. This was to ensure information richness and diversity of experiences between genders. Cases were coded from (C1) to (C5) to maintain ethical confidentiality and protect privacy, corresponding to the numbers recorded in the association's files. Interviews focused on investigating the history of religious socialization, the nature of the relationship with parents, and paths of behavioral modification, during the time period covered by the researcher's field visits, with full commitment to the ethical standards of social research and the respondent's right to confidentiality.

THE SECOND TOPIC : PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

First Requirement: Analysis of Field Cases

First section : Case One (C1/01)/ The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Effectiveness of Religious Upbringing

The first case (C1/01) in our field study represents a precise sociological model of the complex interaction between theoretical religious upbringing and violent family practices, and how the latter can undermine the effectiveness of the former during critical childhood stages.

The respondent, a 32-year-old male residing in the neighborhood of Ouled Sidi Yahia in Khemis Miliana, grew up in an apparently conservative family. He stated that his parents were committed to religious rituals such as prayer and fasting, and that his mother was keen on teaching him the Qur'an and respect for parents. However, the shocking gap between "religious discourse" and "behavioral practice" was decisive. The respondent suffered deep psychological trauma from witnessing domestic violence, stating that his father used to beat his mother in front of him ("My father used to beat my mother in front of me"), which created in him an early aversion toward paternal authority despite his inner reverence for religion.

This internal psychological conflict manifested in temporary deviant behaviors during his youth, including alcohol consumption, fighting, and theft, as an unconscious retaliatory response to the violence he endured. He described his father's punishment as extremely harsh, including threats with a heated knife, fire, and being tied to trees for two days. However, his trajectory did not end in deviance. After leaving home and moving to Blida, meeting a mosque imam became a turning point. This external religious intervention compensated for the lack of family care. He found in the mosque a spiritual refuge that taught him proper prayer and Qur'anic recitation free from violence, and he was advised not to remain isolated.

Analytically, this case confirms Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), as religious upbringing loses its preventive value if not accompanied by positive behavioral modeling (role modeling). Religion here did not prevent deviance in childhood due to "violent modeling," but it functioned as a corrective mechanism in adulthood. The respondent sincerely described how his relationship with

religion shifted from obligation to psychological comfort. During the interview, signs of anxiety and tears were observed despite his neat appearance. He said: "Religion is good. When I perform ablution and go to pray, I find peace... I learned many things about religion after I left home." This indicates that religious motivation may be temporally delayed, becoming an effective behavioral corrective factor after the direct impact of family trauma diminishes.

Second section : Case Two (C2/02)/ Absence of Religious and Family Care (Orphanhood and Adoption Case)

The second case (C2/02) represents a striking example of the consequences of early orphanhood and the absence of alternative family care on a young man's religious and moral formation. The respondent, a 23-year-old male, lost his biological parents at a young age, depriving him of the natural agents of religious socialization. Although he was adopted by another family, the relationship collapsed when he sought marriage and stability, leading to his expulsion and homelessness in abandoned structures and public bathhouses.

This severe emotional and religious void drove him toward deviance (theft and violence) as mechanisms of survival and revenge against a society that rejected him. His deviance extended to his adoptive siblings, whom he stole from and insulted due to feelings of rejection. He stated: "No one taught me; my parents had passed away," indicating that he learned about what is lawful and unlawful later through "people outside." He expressed resentment toward outwardly religious figures because of betrayal by his religious adoptive siblings.

Radical behavioral change occurred only through an alternative institution (Al-Widad Association), where he found in its director a spiritual father who compensated for the absence of family affection and provided the care he lacked. He became attentive to his hygiene and prayers after previously living on the streets. This supports Social Bond Theory regarding reintegration through replacing broken family ties with religious associative bonds that grant identity and dignity and correct life trajectories. He affirmed that had his parents been alive, they would have raised him religiously and prevented this fate.

Third section : Case Three (C3/03)/ Economic Pressures vs. Religious Controls

The third case (C3/03) represents a complex sociological model of the sharp interaction between severe economic pressures and firmly rooted religious

controls within a conservative family, raising the issue of prioritizing “economic survival” over “moral commitment.”

The respondent, a 32-year-old woman from a very poor family in Ain Benian, had an unemployed father and a stay-at-home mother. She dropped out of school early and worked as a domestic worker to support her family. In this fragile context, she became pregnant outside marriage after exploitation by her employer, creating severe psychological and religious shock for her and her conservative family.

Despite committing this sin, her deep religious upbringing (Qur'an memorization, prayer, respect for parents) played a decisive role in preventing complete family breakdown or her fleeing from home. When the matter was discovered, she faced violent punishment from her mother but did not run away. This reflects the strength of “internal religious conscience” even in moments of weakness.

She coped through Religious Coping, considering what happened a betrayal of her parents' upbringing rather than merely a legal mistake. She said with deep remorse during the interview: “Religion is sacred to me... I respect and obey my parents... The only mistake I made against them felt like I betrayed their upbringing.”

Analytically, this case confirms that poverty can be a powerful driver of deviance, temporarily overriding preventive religious barriers, especially when economic necessity pushes girls into unprotected work environments without sufficient family supervision. However, sound religious upbringing functioned as an emotional and moral “safety valve” preventing total rupture. With the support of Al-Widad Association, which rejected abortion for religious reasons and advised her to confess to her mother, she legally placed the child for adoption, gradually reintegrating socially. Thus, religious upbringing did not prevent the mistake due to necessity, but it prevented her “social death” by preserving family bonds despite the crisis.

Fourth section : Case Four (C4/04)/ Severe Deviance and Absence of Religious Restraint

The fourth case (C4/04) represents the harshest model of the consequences of early educational and religious vacuum on social behavior. The respondent, a 23-year-old male orphaned at a young age, lost both family protection and moral restraint essential for internal control. He dropped out of school and lived on the streets, stating, “The street raised me.”

This led to severe deviance including theft, excessive violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and long prison terms. The absence of religious socialization deprived him of a moral compass. At one point, he even tore Qur'anic verses in anger upon first entering the association, expressing rejection of religious symbolism he had never internalized.

However, his current exposure to the association's environment has begun to evoke deep remorse. He realized belatedly that religion could have been a preventive deterrent. He bitterly stated: "Religious upbringing is good; if I had received it when I was young, I would not have reached this point." Sociologically, this case confirms that the absence of socialization agents in childhood opens the door to dangerous deviance, and later remorse may mark the beginning of reform through alternative care.

Fifth section : Case Five (C5/05)/ Reform Through Good Companionship and Maturity

The fifth case (C5/05) illustrates how personal maturity and a positive work environment can redirect deviant behavior toward rectitude. The respondent, a 25-year-old male from a religiously conservative family, lost his father early, creating a supervisory vacuum exploited by delinquent peers.

His deviance began in adolescence with smoking and escalated to drug addiction, alcohol consumption, and inhalant abuse. He verbally abused his mother and stole money to finance his addiction, despite memorizing the Qur'an in childhood and having a father who had memorized sixty chapters.

Religious conscience was insufficient during adolescence due to weak supervision. The turning point came when he moved away for work and met righteous colleagues. This restored his moral compass and encouraged him to abandon intoxicants. He realized the true value of his parents.

Analytically, this case confirms that the positive effects of religious upbringing may be delayed until adulthood when combined with a supportive social environment. As he stated: "Religious upbringing in adulthood and being away strengthened my relationship with them," demonstrating how temporary distance and work can activate latent religious values and transform a youth from a family burden into a responsible provider.

Second Requirement: Discussion of Hypotheses

First section: Religious upbringing contributes to enhancing parents' value within the family and protecting them from crimes.

Field data confirmed that religious upbringing functions as a value shield protecting parents from serious crimes, even if it does not entirely prevent deviance. In Case Three (C3), religious conscience prevented complete family abandonment despite fornication due to poverty. In Case Five (C5), distance and work increased parental appreciation. Conversely, absence of religious socialization in Cases Two and Four (C2, C4) was associated with extreme aggression toward parents, including insults, theft, and violence, supporting Stark & Bainbridge (1980) regarding religion as a regulator of family compliance.

Second section: Mechanisms of religious upbringing contribute to modifying deviant behaviors against parents.

Corrective mechanisms appeared through remorse and repentance (Cases One and Four), alternative institutions like Al-Widad Association (Case Two), and fear of divine punishment (Case Three).

However, religious upbringing does not operate in a vacuum. Domestic violence (Case One), economic hardship (Case Three), and early parental loss (Cases Two and Four) significantly affected outcomes. Thus, the effectiveness of religion depends on the quality of its nurturing environment and family stability.

Conclusion:

The study validates the hypotheses, demonstrating that religious upbringing serves as a preventive factor capable of modifying deviant behaviors and reinforcing parental value within the Algerian family context. However, findings reveal that effectiveness is not absolute; rather, it increases substantially when combined with family affection and socioeconomic stability. Conversely, impact diminishes in contexts characterized by domestic violence or total parental absence without alternative care structures. Religion functions as "spiritual capital" helping individuals resist or recover from deviance (Ellison & Levin, 1998). Research highlights that religious education must integrate with psychological support to ensure lasting behavioral change. Future interventions should focus on holistic approaches combining spiritual guidance with social welfare policies. This ensures religious values are internalized as mechanisms of self-control rather than mere external compliance, fostering healthier family dynamics and reducing intergenerational conflict within vulnerable communities.

Policymakers must prioritize efforts between religious institutions and social services to maximize protective outcomes.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthening rehabilitative and caregiving roles:** Transform charitable associations and shelters into comprehensive rehabilitation centers integrating religious guidance with psychological support.
2. **Adopting balanced (Sociological) parenting:** Raise awareness about the dangers of domestic violence and replace corporal punishment with dialogue and positive role modeling.
3. **Integrating economic support with religious awareness:** Link religious programs with developmental projects and financial support for poor families to prevent deviance driven by economic necessity.
4. **Sustainable aftercare programs for orphans:** Provide long-term psychological and religious mentoring even after leaving care centers to prevent relapse and ensure social integration, enhancing overall community security.

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