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Parental Perceptions of Juvenile Delinquency: Risk Factors and the Gendered Construction of Responsibility

- *Survey conducted among a group of parents residing in the new town of Ali Mendjeli, Constantine (Neighborhood Units 5, 7, and 14)* -

تصورات الوالدين لجنوح الأحداث: عوامل الخطر وبناء المسؤوليات وفق منظور جندري

– دراسة استقصائية لمجموعة من الآباء الذين يقطنون بالمدينة الجديدة على منجلي قسنطينة

(الوحدات الجوارية الخامسة والسابعة والرابعة عشر) –

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Article abstract:

Parents often perceive juvenile delinquency through certain character traits and behaviours which they rightly interpret as warning signs. Among these behaviours, aggression, violence and a failure to respect social or family norms are frequently mentioned. Added to these are factors such as truancy and a lack of interest in schoolwork, which are regarded as indicators that may signal a future risk. Furthermore, the influence of peer groups is often cited as an aggravating factor, encouraging engagement in risky behaviour. Drug use is also a potential gateway to deviant behavior. Within this complex family and social context, a lack of dialogue within the family, combined with poor communication, can exacerbate social exclusion. Furthermore, adolescents' vulnerability is exacerbated by their natural emotional fragility and impulsivity. These interactions highlight an alarming combination of individual, family and social factors. The study therefore aims to explore parents' perceptions of the warning signs of juvenile delinquency through an analysis based on a questionnaire processed using the EVOC 2005 software. The methodology focuses on analysing free associations and correlates word frequency with average rank to determine the structure and semantic field of social representations. The findings are presented in a four-cell table that distinguishes between the central core, peripheral elements, and divergent elements, providing an initial insight into the structure of social representations. The results revealed different social representations according to gender. Fathers were more frequently associated with elements related to delinquency, whereas mothers were more often associated with psychological, educational and caregiving dimensions.

***Keywords**: Juvenile delinquency, Social representations, Deviant behaviours, Adolescent vulnerability.*

ملخص المقال:

إدراك الآباء للجنوح لدى المراهقين يعتمد على سمات وسلوكات تعد مؤشرات مبكرة للخطر. يرتبط هذا السلوك بالعنف والعدوانية وعدم احترام القواعد الاجتماعية أو الأسرية. وللاشارة يعتبر غياب الانضباط المدرسي وفقدان الاهتمام بالدراسة مؤشرات إنذار. كما ينظر إلى تأثير الأقران كعامل يفاقم السلوكات الخطرة، بينما يعد تعاطي المخدرات مدخلا محتملا للسلوكات المنحرفة. ويسهم ضعف الحوار الأسري ونقص التواصل في التهميش الاجتماعي، كما يزيد الضعف العاطفي والاندفاعية لدى المراهقين من هشاشتهم وتعرضهم للخطر. وتعكس هذه العوامل مزيجا من عناصر شخصية وأسرية واجتماعية مثيرة للقلق. تهدف هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف التمثلات الاجتماعية للآباء حول علامات الجنوح المحتملة، باستخدام استبيان وتحليل عبر برنامج *EVOC 2005*. وفق منهجية تحليل الاستحضارات الحرة من خلال الربط بين تكرار الكلمات ومتوسط رتبتها لتحديد البنية والحقل الدلالي للتمثلات الاجتماعية. وتعرض النتائج في جدول رباعي يميز بين النواة المركزية والعناصر المحيطية والمتباينة، مما يوفر تصورا أوليا لبنية التمثل الاجتماعي. تشير النتائج إلى تصورات "مجنسة"؛ حيث يرتبط الآباء بالانحراف، والأمهات بالضعف النفسي والتربوي.

كلمات مفتاحية: جنوح الاحداث، لتصورات الاجتماعية، السلوكات المنحرفة، هشاشة المراهقين.

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Problematic-Introduction

In recent years, Algerian society has undergone significant social, political, economic and cultural transformations. These changes have reshaped social dynamics and created anxiety and challenges for individuals and communities. Certain sections of the population have been marginalised economically, culturally and socially. The inability to keep pace with these changes has led to exclusion, increased precariousness and a worsening of social problems. The media have highlighted crime, violence, insecurity, drug addiction and prostitution. These phenomena are often rooted in unemployment and difficulties in accessing housing. Rapid and poorly controlled urban development has disrupted the organisation of residential areas, particularly in medium-sized and large cities.

In Algeria, the growing complexity of social phenomena has led to rapid change, which has paradoxically reinforced a certain form of stagnation affecting various aspects of daily life. This upheaval is accompanied by a steady erosion of moral values and the emergence of unusual behaviours, which are gradually undermining the social fabric. Faced with this deterioration, society is grappling with a multifaceted crisis characterised by the proliferation of social ills and the constant worsening of living conditions for the most vulnerable sections of the population. Particular attention is needed to limit the negative repercussions, especially on children and adolescents, amongst whom delinquency and deviant behaviour are on the rise. These abuses constitute a direct threat to public safety, reflecting an alarming drift away from the fundamental values and regulatory principles essential to stability and social cohesion. Consequently, the family unit is under increasing pressure, with rapid repercussions on the societal structure as a whole. The weakening of this vital core encourages the rise of deviant behaviour, a marked increase in crime and the emergence of worrying social ills. This vicious circle further amplifies an already apparent fragmentation, heightening the risk of a gradual disintegration of the social environment.

In the face of this growing social crisis, it is becoming imperative to step up collective efforts to develop and implement effective solutions that not only curb the spread of the problem but also address its deep-rooted and complex causes.

Young people from new urban areas or neighbourhoods, where territories have often been fragmented and occupied by offenders affiliated with local criminal gangs, generally exhibit more serious criminal behaviour. However, these same young people appear to share several common characteristics, both on an individual and a social level. These characteristics include, primarily, their gender (predominantly male), their residence in new neighbourhoods, a situation of poverty and economic and social precariousness, a history of criminality often present within their families, problematic siblings, various social disorders, as well as regular interactions with peers who are themselves involved in delinquent activities. These findings have been corroborated by numerous studies (Alleyne and Wood, 2010; Esbensen et al., 2001; Haymoz, 2014).

A more in-depth analysis of these characteristics would not only help to better identify the specific traits that distinguish these young people from other types of offenders, but would also enable the development of targeted interventions tailored to their circumstances, particularly those aimed at young members of groups or gangs from housing estates.

1.Theoretical context

1.1 Social representations and the educational field

The analysis of social representations is central to understanding educational dynamics (Moscovici, 1984). In the educational field, they reflect and shape the practices of teachers, pupils and parents, whilst contributing to the construction of the actors' identities (Deschamps et al., 1982).

1.2 Social representations

The concept of social representations plays a central role in the humanities and social sciences, thanks to its rich theoretical framework and its ability to explain a variety of phenomena (Moscovici, 1961). It enables us to examine social behaviours and interactions whilst preserving their intrinsic complexity (Fischer, 1987).

1.3 Structural approach

The structural approach to social representations, developed by J.-C. Abric and the Aix school, offers an in-depth analysis of how representational systems are organised internally. From this perspective, a social representation is not merely a collection of opinions or beliefs, but is organised in a structured manner under the influence of the values and history specific to each group. The approach, initially inspired by the work of Moscovici, defines two major dimensions: content and structure.

1.4 Juvenile delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is a complex social phenomenon that highlights the difficulties young people face in integrating into society and socialising. It manifests itself in a range of antisocial behaviours, ranging from minor acts of incivility to more serious criminal offences.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Sample

The sample selected for this study was determined in accordance with the objective of our investigation. It consists of parents of adolescents from the city of Ali Mendjeli, Constantine (neighborhood units 5, 7, and 14).

A. The Evocation questionnaire:

B. The centrality test:

2.2 Data analysis

The collected data were processed using the EVOC 2005 software, specifically designed for the analysis of social representations. This technique enables the prototypical and categorical analysis of free associations and the semantic field of social representations, based on three essential parameters (Vergès, 1992, 1995):

- Minimum frequency,
- Mean Rank, and
- Intermediate frequency of verbal productions.

2.3 Descriptive Data of the Sample

The characteristics of our sample concern parents of adolescents residing in the city of Ali Mendjeli, Constantine, particularly in neighbourhoods' units 5, 7, and 14. Our sample is composed of 16 women and 15 men.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample (Parents of Adolescents)

	Characteristics	Responses	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Parents of adolescents	**Gender**	Male	15	48.38%
		Female	16	51.61%
	Age	35–40 years	11	35.48%
		41–46 years	13	41.93%
		Over 46 years	7	22.58%
		No response	0	—
	Marital Status	Married	25	80.64%
		Widowed	4	12.90%
		Divorced	2	6.45%
	Adolescents in Care	Middle school student	8	25.80%
		High school student	16	51.61%
		Vocational training	6	19.35%
		No response	1	3.22%
	Parents' Educational Level	Primary	4	12.90%
		Middle school	6	19.35%
		Secondary	11	35.48%
		University	10	32.25%
		No response	0	—
	Total		31	100%

The parent sample consists of 31 participants, distributed as 48.38% man and 51.61% woman. The analyzed responses were obtained from 15 male parents and 16 female parents.

Regarding age distribution, the sample is predominantly composed of a relatively young population, representing approximately 77.41% of the total. In terms of family characteristics, the majority of participants (80.64%) are married. Furthermore, 70% of the studied population have attained a secondary or university level of education.

2.4 Materials and methods

The primary objective of this study is to identify the nature and structure of social representations concerning the potential characteristics of delinquent individuals among parents of adolescents residing in the new town of Ali Mendjeli. To collect the data, we employed a questionnaire, a conventional tool in the analysis of social representations (Abric, 2003). This instrument included a free association test, enabling the exploration of both the content and the structure of social representations related to the "potential characteristics or traits of delinquents." A total of N = 31 parents (both men and women) participated in the study.

The free association method aims to reveal implicit or latent elements that may be attenuated or concealed in more elaborate discursive productions (Abric, 2003, p. 63).

- **Frequency of occurrence**, which reflects the shared nature of a given cognition within the studied group. This frequency is measured through salience, that is, the number of times a word is mentioned relative to the entire population analyzed.

- **Mean rank of importance**, resulting from the ranking of words carried out by the participants themselves, according to the importance they attribute to them.

The intersection of these two indicators (frequency and rank) makes it possible to construct a double-entry table divided into four quadrants (see Table 2), in which each element is positioned according to its type. The correlation between these two dimensions constitutes a key indicator for identifying the central elements of social representations (Abric, 2003b). This approach is grounded in prior research, particularly the studies cited in (Zerrouk Z. and Essfioui L., 2024).

Table 2. Analysis of Ranked Evocations According to Vergès (1992, 1994)

Frequency	High Frequency	low frequency
High Importance	Case 1 : Core Zone	Case 2 : Peripheral Elements
Low Importance	Case 3 : Contrast Elements	Case 4 : Second Peripheral Elements

- **Case 1:** This category groups the elements of the representation that are most frequent (high salience) and those considered most significant by the surveyed population. These elements include synonyms and prototypes associated with the object of study (the potential characteristics or traits of delinquents). According to Abric (2003, p. 64), not everything listed in this case is necessarily central, although the central core is located here.
- **Case 2:** This includes peripheral elements that are considered important.
- **Case 3:** This category contains elements and terms mentioned by a small number of participants (low frequency) but perceived as highly significant by them. Known as the "contrast elements zone," it can reveal the presence of a minority subgroup sharing a distinct representation. This case can complement the so-called "first peripheral" elements or coexist with the central core in Case 1, thus conveying an ambivalent representation that may drive change.
- **Case 4:** This is the "second peripheral" zone, composed of elements that are infrequently mentioned but considered significant within the overall field of the representation.

3. Results and data analysis

3.1 Collection of associative responses

The 31 participants in the study produced a theoretical total of 155 words or expressions (31 subjects × 5 free associations). The resulting lexical corpus was simplified through semantic grouping, with the removal of unwanted terms (spelling errors, illegible elements). Semantically related words or synonyms were consolidated under common categories to ensure a coherent representation.

The hierarchical evocation approach developed by Vergès (1992) was employed, using the EVOC software to identify and extract the central core from the processed data. According to Vergès (1994), three key indicators are used to define the structure of the social representation:

- **Frequency of occurrence** of the responses within the studied population.

- **Mean rank of appearance** in the free associations.
- **Mean rank of importance** as assigned according to the participants' subjective evaluation.

3.2 Results and interpretations

Concepts or Expressions Used by Parents of Adolescents to Qualify the Potential Characteristics of Juvenile Delinquents

A simple lexical analysis yielded the following data:

Woman Parents :

- Number of texts: 15
- Total number of words (occurrences): 97 (words counted separately, including hyphenated terms)
- Number of distinct forms: After removing repeated words (e.g., fraud, lie, aggression), 64 distinct forms remain.
- Number of hapax (words appearing only once): 37

Man Parents:

- Number of texts: 15
- Total number of words (occurrences): 105
- Number of distinct forms: After removing repeated words (e.g., fraud, lie, aggression), 73 distinct forms remain.
- Number of hapax (words appearing only once): 42

This analysis highlights both the diversity and specificity of the lexical choices made by parents when describing the potential traits of juvenile delinquents, providing a foundation for identifying central and peripheral elements in their social representations.

Table 3. Distribution of Expressions Cited (Salience) by Female Parents to Describe Potential Traits of Delinquents and Their Mean Importance Ranks

Expression	Number of Occurrences	Mean Rank of Importance	Occurrences × Mean Rank
Introverted	5	2.5	12.50
Immaturity	4	4.00	16.00
Parental resignation	6	2.00	12.00
Absenteeism	19	3.16	60.04
Threats	18	2.25	45.00
Poor school supervision	4	4.00	16.00
Aggression	22	4.40	96.80
Unconscious	2	2.00	4.00
Hostility	3	3.00	9.00
Extraversion	9	4.50	40.50
Activity	5	5.00	25.00
Fraud	8	2.00	16.00
Lies	11	5.50	60.50
Anxiety	6	3.00	18.00
Vulnerability	10	5.00	50.00
Family violence	13	3.50	45.50
Low income	2	2.00	4.00
Large family	3	3.00	9.00
Insults and blasphemy	14	4.66	65.24

Poverty	5	5.00	25.00
Theft	14	3.50	49.00
First offense	5	5.00	25.00
Authority challenged	7	3.50	24.50
Misdeeds	5	5.00	25.00
Substance abuse	5	5.00	25.00
Physical punishment	2	2.00	4.00
Inconsistent discipline	10	2.50	25.00
Smoking cigarettes	2	2.00	4.00
Does not do homework	1	1.00	1.00
Bad company	4	4.00	16.00
Childhood maltreatment	1	1.00	1.00
Class disruption	2	2.00	4.00
Sexual incident	4	4.00	—
Threats with knives	1	1.00	1.00
Indifference	13	4.50	58.50
Irresponsible	1	1.00	1.00
Incivility	8	4.00	32.00
Neighborhood crime	5	2.50	12.50

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3.3 Presentation of the hierarchical evocation analysis from women parents

The hierarchical evocation method classifies expressions based on frequency and mean importance rank (RM), separating them into central and peripheral zones according to Vergès (1992, 1994).

Table 4. Hierarchical Evocation Analysis of Social Representations on the Object "Potential Characteristics and Traits of Delinquents"

Frequency	High Frequency **(Mean Rank > 2.8–2.9)**	low frequency (**Mean Rank > 2.8–2.9)**
High Importance High Frequency (≥ 22)	Aggression: F = 22; RM = 4.4, Absenteeism: F = 19; RM = 3.16, Threats: F = 18; RM = 2.25, Insults and blasphemy: F = 14; RM = 4.66, Lies: F = 11; RM = 5.50 **Core Zone (Nucleus**	Family violence : F = 13 ; RM = 3.50, Vulnerability : F = 10 ; RM = 5.00, Inconsistent discipline : F = 10 ; RM = 2.50, Extraversion : F = 9; RM = 4.50, Fraud : F = 8 ; RM = 2.00 **First Peripheral Zone (Near Core):**
Low Importance Low Frequency (≤ 5)	Introverted: F = 5; RM = 2.5, Poverty: F = 5; RM = 5.00, First offense: F = 5; RM = 5.0, Substance abuse: F = 5; RM = 5.0, Misdeeds: F = 5; RM = 5.0, Sexual incident: F = 4; RM = 4 Bad company: F = 4; RM = 4, Poor school supervision: F = 4; RM = 4, Neighborhood crime: F = 5; RM = 2.5.	Indifference: F = 13; RM = 4.5, Inconsistent discipline: F = 10; RM = 2.5, Incivility: F = 8; RM = 4.0, Authority challenged: F = 7; RM = 3.5 Anxiety : F = 6; RM = 3 Parental resignation : F = 6 ; RM = 2 | **Second Peripheral Zone (Distant**

	Contrastive Elements:	

Table 5. Distribution of Cited Expressions (Salience) by man Parents and Their Mean Importance Ranks

Evoked Expressions	Frequency (F)	Mean Rank of Importance (RM)	Frequency × RM
Dropout	1	1.00	1.00
Smoking	11	2.20	24.20
Authority challenged	12	3.00	36.00
Introverted	4	4.00	16.00
Class disruption	9	4.50	72.00
Absenteeism	4	2.00	8.00
Indecent attire	5	2.50	12.50
Aggressive behavior	15	2.50	37.50
Threats	11	3.66	40.26
Pathological sibling	2	1.00	2.00
Large family	2	2.00	4.00
Neighborhood crime	6	3.00	18.00
Antisocial family history	10	3.33	33.30
Low income	7	3.50	24.50
Hanging out outdoors	10	3.50	35.50
Gang affiliation	6	3.00	18.00
Neuroticism	4	4.00	16.00
Fraud	16	4.00	64.00
Lies	6	3.00	18.00
Theft	20	4.00	80.00
Nighttime violence	5	2.50	12.50
Impulsivity	2	2.00	4.00
Negative emotions	3	3.00	9.00
Aggressive and violent behavior	12	4.00	36.00
Inappropriate hairstyle	5	5.00	25.00
Parental/sibling crime	1	1.00	1.00
Hostility	5	5.00	25.00
Family breakdown	9	4.50	—
Youth gang presence	4	4.00	16.00
Arrogance	1	1.00	1.00
Physical abuse	2	3.00	6.00
School neglect	3	3.00	9.00
Insults and blasphemy	10	5.50	55.00
Drugs	11	5.50	60.50
Sexual aggression	3	3.00	9.00

3.4 Presentation of the hierarchical evocation analysis from male parents

The hierarchical evocation analysis classifies expressions according to frequency and mean rank of importance, identifying the central core, first periphery, contrastive elements, and second periphery. This approach highlights which characteristics are most salient in male parents' social representations of juvenile delinquency, combining both how frequently a trait is mentioned and the subjective importance attributed by participants.

Frequency	High Frequency **(Mean Rank > 2.8–2.9)**	low frequency (**Mean Rank > 2.8–2.9)**
High Importance High Frequency (≥ 21)	"Theft: F = 20; RM = 4.0, Fraud: F = 16; RM = 4.0, Aggressive and violent behaviors: F = 12; RM = 4.0, Authority transgressed: F = 12; RM = 3.0, Smoking a cigarette: F = 11; RM = 2.2, Threats: F = 11; RM = 3.66, and Narcotics: F = 11; RM = 5.5." **Core Zone (Nucleus**	"Family history: F/M = 10; RM = 3.50, Insults and blasphemy: F/M = 10; RM = 5.50, Staying out late: F/M = 10; RM = 3.50, Classroom disturbance: F/M = 9; RM = 4.50, Income insecurity: F/M = 7; RM = 3.50, Family breakdown: F/M = 9; RM = 4.50." **First Peripheral Zone (Near Core)**:
Low Importance Low Frequency (≤ 7)	Introverted: F = 5; RM = 2.5, Poverty: F = 5; RM = 5.00, First offense: F = 5; RM = 5.0, Substance abuse: F = 5; RM = 5.0, Misdeeds: F = 5; RM = 5.0, Sexual incident: F = 4; RM = 4 Bad company: F = 4; RM = 4, Poor school supervision: F = 4; RM = 4, Neighborhood crime: F = 5; RM = 2.5. **Contrastive Elements**:	"Lying (F = 6; RM = 3.00), Gang affiliation (F = 6; RM = 3.5), [unspecified] (F = 6; RM = 3.0), Indecent attire (F = 5; RM = 2.5), Nocturnal violence (F = 5; RM = 2.5), Inappropriate hairstyle (F = 5; RM = 5.0), and Hostility (F = 5; RM = 5.0)." **Second Peripheral Zone (Distant**

Table 6. Hierarchical Evocation Analysis – Male Parents
Frequencies and Importance

Quadrant	Characteristics / Items	Frequency (F)	Mean Rank (RM)
Central Core	Theft	20	4.00
	Fraud	16	4.00
	Aggressive and violent behaviour	12	4.00
	Authority challenged	12	3.00
	Smoking	11	2.20
	Threats	11	3.66
	Drugs	11	5.50
Additional Core Elements	Family history of antisocial behaviour	10	3.50
	Insults and blasphemy	10	5.50
	Hanging out outdoors	10	3.50
	Class disruption	9	4.50
	Low income	7	3.50
	Family breakdown	9	4.50
First Periphery	Introverted	4	4.00
	Absenteeism	4	2.00
	Neuroticism	4	4.00
	Impulsivity	2	2.00
	Negative emotions	3	3.00
	Pathological sibling	2	1.00
	Large family	2	2.00
Contrastive Elements	Lies	6	3.00
	Gang affiliation	6	3.50
	[missing item]	6	3.00
	Indecent attire	5	2.50
	Nighttime violence	5	2.50
	Inappropriate hairstyle	5	5.00
	Hostility	5	5.00
Second Periphery	[Low frequency, low importance elements farthest from the core]	—	—

4. Discussion of the results

The analysis of the results obtained invites several reflections. A social representation establishes a relationship with its object along two principal dimensions: that of "symbolization," through which it substitutes for the object, and that of "interpretation," which assigns meaning to it. These meanings stem from a process that transforms representation into both a "construction" and an "expression" of the subject, as noted by Jodelet (1989, p. 61). In the context of this study, the social representation of the traits or potential characteristics of a delinquent is considered a modeling of the object, whether perceived or inferred through the analysis of the linguistic material within a structural approach. The interactions among the various elements play a determining role in this process. Jodelet further develops this reflection by raising several key

questions: to whom does knowledge belong, and where does it originate? What do we truly know, and by what means is this knowledge acquired? What are its foundations, and what implications does it carry? (1989, p. 61).

In this regard, the investigation into the social representations held by women and men as parents was conducted using a prototypical analysis in order to highlight the organizational structure of these representations. This approach, grounded in the central core theory developed by Abric (1994), aims to identify the most commonly shared elements within a social group (parents), as well as their hierarchy based on frequency of evocation. The corpus used for this analysis consists of multiple evocations collected from participants. These evocations were previously standardized and classified according to their frequency of occurrence and their rank of evocation, with the analysis relying exclusively on these two indicators. This made it possible to identify several levels of organization: a central core representing the most salient elements, a first periphery, a second periphery, and, finally, contrasted elements. The results indicate that the representation constructed by female parents is dominated by a strongly negative central core, characterized by behaviors of transgression (lying, fraud), school disengagement (absenteeism), and violence (aggression, threats). This structuring reflects a stigmatizing perspective centered on parental disengagement.

The first periphery reinforces this representation through references to poverty, theft, and family violence, thereby highlighting the role of the socio-economic context in parental perceptions. The second periphery, in turn, introduces explanatory factors related to the social environment (neighborhood criminality, substance abuse) and the educational sphere (physical punishment, inconsistency in discipline). Finally, the marginal elements reflect individual traits (introversion, modesty) or specific situations (large family, sexual incident) which, although present, remain peripheral to the dominant representation. Overall, this structuring suggests that female parents are primarily perceived through a logic of social stigmatization, in which deviant behaviors and disadvantaged contexts take precedence over the recognition of educational and protective roles.

Consequently, the prototypical analysis of social representations of parents according to gender reveals significant differences in the dimensions associated with fathers and mothers. On the side of male parents, the central core is structured around violence, fraud/theft/lying, transgression of authority, smoking, and school absenteeism. These representations primarily emphasize visible deviant behaviors associated with delinquency, incivility, and criminality. The first periphery extends this core toward family and neighborhood criminality, affiliation with marginal groups, and indicators of social marginalization such as indecent clothing. The second periphery, more distant, associates men with contextual realities (drug use, precarious income, mental health issues) and negative individual traits (introversion, arrogance). These representations thus convey an image of fathers that is strongly linked to social and criminal insecurity.

Conversely, for female parents, the central core also reveals common elements—violence, fraud/lying, transgression of authority, absenteeism, and smoking—but it is more strongly accompanied by psychological and educational dimensions. The first periphery highlights parental disengagement, family conflicts, immaturity, and poor school supervision, reflecting a representation of the mother as deficient in her educational role. The second periphery refers to psychological and affective traits (anxiety, negative emotions, introversion), as well as to dimensions of social regulation (self-discipline, awareness, activity). Thus, mothers appear less associated with serious criminality and are more situated within the domain of educational and psychological deficiencies.

Conclusion

The analysis of social representations highlights a gendered construction of parental figures, in which fathers are associated with deviance and criminality, whereas mothers are perceived as vulnerable or deficient in educational and psychological capacities. These distinctions reflect persistent social stereotypes, criminalizing men while psychologizing women in their parental roles (Moscovici, 1961). They also illustrate social norms and the symbolic power relations described by Bourdieu (1998), which naturalize the gendered division of educational responsibilities. Finally, this differentiation aligns with a logic of social control, whereby the visible behaviors of fathers and the invisible shortcomings of mothers are regulated according to distinct expectations (Foucault, 1975). These findings underscore that parental representations contribute to the reproduction of gendered social relations and shape the perception of familial responsibility. From this perspective, there is an urgent need to reconsider the roles of socialisation institutions such as the family and school, whilst defining the responsibilities of both mothers and fathers in supporting the educational process and guiding the behaviour of the younger generations. This requires a focus on how to adapt to current social challenges and transformations, including issues such as juvenile delinquency.

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