THE MAIN SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

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Abstract: This study examines the principal social factors contributing to the emergence and development of deviant behavior within society. It highlights how family environment, peer influence, educational context, media exposure, and socio-economic conditions shape the behavioral patterns of individuals, particularly adolescents. The analysis emphasizes that weak parental control, dysfunctional family structures, and lack of emotional support significantly increase the likelihood of deviance. Likewise, peer pressure and association with delinquent groups serve as strong predictors of risky and antisocial behaviors. The study also explores how school climate, teacher-student relationships, and institutional discipline affect students' social adaptation. Additionally, the impact of mass media, digital networks, and community conditions—such as unemployment, inequality, and social disorganization—is analyzed. The research underscores that preventing deviant behavior requires a comprehensive social approach integrating family support, educational reforms, community engagement, and youth-centered policies.

Keywords: *deviant behavior; social factors; family influence; peer pressure; socio-economic conditions; school environment; media impact; socialization; youth behavior; prevention strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Deviant behavior is behavior that violates social norms or rules. Modern sociologists agree that deviance cannot be explained solely by psychological or biological markers; instead, social structures and environments play a central role.

Definitions and Theoretical Frameworks Deviant behavior refers to actions that violate formal rules (laws) or informal norms. Theoretical frameworks emphasize structural inequality, weak social ties, cultural conflicts, and social tensions as factors that contribute to deviant behavior.

The main social factors that influence deviant behavior are:

1. Family dynamics and upbringing

A dysfunctional family environment—lack of parental control, inconsistent discipline, and conflict in the home—is strongly associated with deviance. Scholars argue that weak family ties reduce the internalization of social norms.

2. Socioeconomic status and poverty

Poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunities exacerbate hopelessness and weaken social integration. Research shows that structural factors such as inequality and regional development are often more strongly associated with youth deviance than income.

3. Peer influence and subcultures

Peer groups play a crucial role, especially among adolescents. If a peer group normalizes deviance, members are more likely to imitate such behavior. Social learning theory supports this dynamic.

4. Weak social control and institutional breakdown

Deviant behavior is widespread when legal, educational, and community institutions fail to effectively

regulate behavior. Weak social control is often cited as a major cause in criminological research.

5. Cultural norms, media influence, and social change

Rapid social change, globalization, and the influence of the media can weaken moral clarity. The media often glorify deviant behavior, drawing lines between acceptable and unacceptable behavior**[1].**

Impact and preventionPreventive strategies should strengthen families, reduce inequality, create positive peer environments, strengthen institutions, and encourage healthy media use. Effective prevention requires interdisciplinary, systemic approaches.Peer groups, micro-social environments, and behavioral pressures.

Peer groups constitute one of the most influential socialization environments for adolescents, often shaping attitudes, decisions, and behavioral tendencies more than the family or school. During adolescence, the desire for acceptance, belonging, and social recognition increases, making young people particularly sensitive to the expectations of their peers. Scholars consistently emphasize that micro-social context—such as informal street groups, neighborhood subcultures, and close friendship circles—plays a crucial role in determining whether young people adopt typical or deviant behavioral patterns**.[2]**

Researchers have widely recognized that peer pressure is one of the strongest predictors of delinquent or risky behavior. A study of 399 adolescents aged 15–18 found a significant positive correlation between peer conformity and delinquent behavior, indicating that the more adolescents tried to conform to their peers, the more likely they were to break the rules [**3].** Similarly, a survey focusing on school dropout behavior found that approximately 63.75 percent of youth who dropped out of school early cited peer pressure as a determining factor.

Another investigation into street-related groups found that over 66% of participants belonged to informal or gang-like groups, with more than half joining due to the influence of friends.

The mechanisms behind this effect can be explained by social learning theory and differential association theory. According to these frameworks, youth learn behavior—social or deviant—through observation and interaction with significant peers. When adolescents spend a lot of time with friends who engage in risky behaviors such as vandalism, violence, drug use, or truancy, they come to accept these behaviors as acceptable or even desirable. Peer-based reinforcement, such as approval, praise, or improved group status, further reinforces deviant tendencies[4].

Street gangs and other informal youth structures also offer adolescents a sense of belonging and identity that they may not find in formal institutions. In neighborhoods where community structures are weak or where adult supervision is limited, informal peer groups often function as alternative systems of support and recognition. These groups can provide protection, shared norms, and emotional solidarity, but they often normalize antisocial behavior. Longitudinal research has confirmed that having delinquent peers is one of the most direct and powerful predictors of later delinquency, even when controlling for family and school variables.

Micro-social environments, such as neighborhoods, local peer networks, and spatial settings (streets, blocks, recreational areas) can either amplify or attenuate peer influence. A study of nearly 500 adolescents found that social disorder, low parental supervision, and neighborhood crime significantly increased the likelihood that youth would adopt the behavioral norms of their peers. In disadvantaged cities, peer groups often fill the gaps left by inadequate institutional structures and offer a sense of identity and social capital that formal systems cannot provide. Peer pressure operates not only through direct suggestion but also through subtle social mechanisms. Adolescents may develop the belief that deviating from group norms will result in social exclusion or ridicule. The desire for social status is particularly strong during adolescence, making young people vulnerable to engaging in behavior that enhances their status within the group. This includes fighting, truancy, stealing, or participating in group-based crimes. Research confirms that adolescents often engage in deviant behavior not because of personal inclinations, but rather to maintain group loyalty or to avoid being perceived as weak. Despite these dangers, it is important to note that not all peer groups have negative consequences. Positive peer networks can foster academic engagement, healthy coping strategies, and prosocial behavior. Thus, the microsocial environment itself is not inherently harmful; rather, the nature of peer norms determines whether the influence is constructive or destructive.

Macro-social factors: the impact of economic inequality, urbanization, and popular culture on deviant behavior Economic inequality and unemployment Economic inequality and high unemployment are widely recognized as major macroeconomic factors contributing to deviant behavior. Research shows that

individuals in socioeconomically disadvantaged environments often experience relative deprivation, hopelessness, and limited legal opportunities for upward mobility, which can lead to deviant behavior such as theft, vandalism, or participation in the informal economy[5].

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the global youth unemployment rate in 2023 was estimated at 13.1%, with higher concentrations in urban poor areas, increasing vulnerability to criminal involvement. [6]. Longitudinal studies have shown that areas with high economic inequality have significantly higher rates of juvenile delinquency and property crime. [7],

The aim of research

The key social determinants influencing deviant behavior will be examined in this study, and their relative contributions to behavioral aberrations among youngsters and adolescents will be ascertained.

Research Goals

1. To investigate how parenting practices, family dynamics, and emotional support contribute to the emergence of deviant inclinations.
2. To examine how social networks, peer pressure, and peer groups affect risky or antisocial behavior.
3. To evaluate how the educational environment, teacher-student interactions, and school conditions affect young people's socialization.
4. To investigate how digital platforms, online communication, and media exposure influence attitudes and behavioral norms.
5. To assess how deviant conduct is impacted by more general socioeconomic variables including unemployment, inequality, and disorganized communities.
6. To make evidence-based suggestions for enhancing preventative tactics in community, school, and family settings.

Methods of Research

A variety of theoretical and empirical techniques are used in the study, such as a review of the literature, content analysis, comparative analysis, sociological surveys, and statistical evaluation. While quantitative techniques assisted in determining the degree of link between social conditions and deviant conduct, qualitative data were utilized to find patterns and social meanings.

Research Results

According to the study, emotional neglect, poor parental participation, and dysfunctional family dynamics greatly raise the risk of misbehavior in young people. One of the best indicators of risky conduct was found to be peer influence, particularly membership in criminal organizations. Another significant factor is the school atmosphere, which is marked by poor academic engagement, lax discipline, and unfavorable interactions between teachers and students. Teenagers' aggressive and antisocial behavior is normalized in part by media and internet platforms. The probability of deviance is further increased by neighborhood disturbance, restricted opportunity, and socioeconomic instability.

Use of the Findings in Practice

The results of the study can be used in community-based preventative campaigns, school counseling programs, family support services, youth rehabilitation programs, and educational policy. The findings provide useful information for creating all-encompassing, multi-level intervention techniques meant to lessen aberrant behavior and promote healthy youth development.

In summary, the peer group and micro-social environment exert strong pressure on adolescent behavior through mechanisms of conformity, social learning, and identity formation. Empirical research suggests that contact with deviant peers, participation in street or informal groups, and exposure to poorly regulated neighborhoods significantly increase the likelihood of delinquent behavior. Therefore, prevention strategies should focus on strengthening positive peer networks, increasing community engagement, supporting youth organizations, and improving neighborhood safety. Creating an environment in which adolescents can satisfy their needs for recognition and belonging is essential to reducing vulnerability to deviant peer influence.

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აბსტრაქტი

სტატიაში განიხილება სოციალური ძირითადი ფაქტორები, რომლებიც გავლენას ახდენენ დევიანტური ქცევის ფორმირებასა და გამოვლინებაზე. განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება დაეთმო ოჯახურ გარემოს, თანატოლების ზეგავლენას, საგანმანათლებლო დაწესებულების პირობებს, მედიის გავლენას და სოციალურ-ეკონომიკურ მდგომარეობებს. ნაჩვენებია, რომ არასაკმარისი მშობლური კონტროლი, დისფუნქციური ოჯახური ატმოსფერო და ემოციური მხარდაჭერის ნაკლებობა მნიშვნელოვნად ზრდის დევიანტური ქცევის განვითარების ალბათობას. ერთ-ერთ ძლიერ წინაპირობად აღინიშნება თანატოლთა ზეწოლა და დელინქვენტურ ჯგუფებთან კავშირი. ანალიზი ხაზს უსვამს სკოლაში არსებულ კლიმატს, პედაგოგთან ურთიერთობის ხარისხს და დისციპლინის დონეს ახალგაზრდების სოციალური ადაპტაციის პროცესში. ასევე განიხილება მედიის, ციფრული ქსელების, უმუშევრობის, სოციალური უთანასწორობისა და საზოგადოებრივი დეზორგანიზაციის გავლენა ახალგაზრდების ქცევაზე. კვლევა ასკვნის, რომ დევიანტური ქცევის პრევენცია მოითხოვს კომპლექსურ სოციალურ მიდგომას, რომელიც აერთიანებს ოჯახის მხარდაჭერას, საგანმანათლებლო გარემოს გაუმჯობესებას, თემის განვითარებას და ახალგაზრდულ პროგრამებს

საკვანძო სიტყვები: *დევიანტური ქცევა; სოციალური ფაქტორები; ოჯახის გავლენა; თანატოლების ზეწოლა; სოციალური-ეკონომიკური პირობები; სასკოლო გარემო; მედიის გავლენა; სოციალიზაცია; ახალგაზრდობა; პრევენცია.*

Аннотация: *В данной работе рассматриваются основные социальные факторы, влияющие на формирование и проявление девиантного поведения. Особое внимание уделяется роли семейной среды, влиянию сверстников, образовательного учреждения, средств массовой информации и социально-экономических условий. Показано, что недостаток родительского контроля, дисфункциональная семейная атмосфера и дефицит эмоциональной поддержки существенно повышают вероятность отклоняющегося поведения. Существенным фактором также является давление группы сверстников и взаимодействие с делинквентными компаниями. Анализ подчеркивает влияние школьного климата, качества педагогического взаимодействия и уровня дисциплины на социальную адаптацию учащихся. Кроме того, исследуется воздействие медиа-контента, цифровых сетей, а также условий сообщества — таких как безработица, социальное неравенство и дезорганизация — на поведение молодежи. Сделан вывод о том, что профилактика девиантного поведения требует комплексного социального подхода, включающего поддержку семьи, реформирование образовательной среды, развитие местного сообщества и реализацию молодежных программ.*

Ключевые слова: *девиантное поведение; социальные факторы; семейное влияние; группа сверстников; социально-экономические условия; школьная среда; влияние медиа; социализация; молодежь; профилактика.*