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**The Family Environment and its  
Influence on the Children's Delinquent Behavior**

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**Abstract:** Throughout this paper, I tried to point out the importance of the family environment on the psycho-behavioral development of the child, of the adult-to be. Even if due to permanent social changes the family can no longer perform certain functions, it remains the place where any child sets the foundation for his biological, psychological, educational, social, cultural training, etc. I have presented the most important family functions considered to be fundamental and responsible for children's psycho-behavioral training. The family has the role of shaping and maintaining the small group, of passing on to the next generations the cultural patterns, thus being formed traditions and customs that maintain and define a whole nation.

**Keywords:** family; psychosocial behaviour; deficiencies; child; adaptation- misfit; environment - family relations

**Family** is and behaves as a basic life matrix for the existence and formation of the child's personality, as a determinant educational environment, but also as a source of misfit and deviant behavior of the child. The family is the first and most important context of life with a special role in socializing the child. Sociologically, the contemporary family experiences a process of structural erosion and resignation from its fundamental functions, a continuous degradation of authority, and implicitly of the quality of the educational environment.

Several risk factors have been identified, some of which are placed at the level of personality but with elements of family origin, which have been classified in factors that regard the whole and the main tendencies of evolution of economic and social conditions, factors that are related to family structure and factors that concern the educational capital of the family.

It has been found that most of the times, emotional deficiencies produced in particular by family-type deficiencies can lead to frustrations, which in turn lead to high levels of aggression. Lack of family structure, quite common during the transition period, are situations that conduct to serious risks in children's education, but it can not be said with certainty that all young people raised in such families inevitably become deviant behaviors.

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The literature highlights a series of parental “mistakes” that can lead to the emergence of deviant behaviors at teenagers such as hyperprotective attitudes, disinterested family attitudes, busy or home-gone parents, hyper-attitude, child abuse through neglect etc.

In any society, family represents a form of human community, made up of at least two individuals, united by marriage and/or paternity, who achieve more or less the biological and/or psychosocial side. This definition was formulated as follows because the social reality generated a variety of family types that can no longer be summed up to only one of the two aspects present in the couple. For example, single-parent families include parental elements and accomplish only the psychosocial side.

Generally however, the life of individuals within the family includes two essential elements:

- *a constant biological side, which has remained almost unchanged over time;*
- *a social side, in constant motion, representing morality, education, economic, legal, psychosocial aspects, etc.*

Family is a social institution and any institution has its own functions. Throughout time these functions have obviously manifested differently – as they represent the total responsibilities that are taken care of in the overall architectonics of economic and social activity in a certain period of time.

There are two types of factors that favor or change negatively the functionality of a family:

1. **External factors** – which are factors from outside the family and act very strongly upon it. The most important are considered to be the political regime of the society, the level of economic development, the law and social policies, the general level of education, education, and civilization;
2. **Internal factors** - those who can be easily accused of malfunctions. Among the most important, we mention: the family dimension, with implications in achievement of socialization and solidarity, the family structure, with an impact on the economic and reproductive function, the division of roles and authority, with repercussions mainly on the function of solidarity. These factors do not act simplistically on the functions defined and attributed to the family, because the disturbances within a function cause changes in all the others in a higher or lower proportion.

The literature speaks of several functions, which are compressed into four functions that the family fulfills, considered by most specialists to be “fundamental”:

- *the economic function;*
- *the socializing function;*
- *the solidarity function;*
- *the sexual and reproductive function.*

But it is hard to say whether today these functions are really fundamental, because this feature is very suitable for a traditional society. The contemporary family, however, violates the taboo of the fundamentalities of the functions, most of them consciously.

Regarding its functionality, the family environment can be analyzed according to several indicators, of which the most important are considered:

- the parents’ interpersonal reporting model, by understanding the level of closeness and understanding, agreement or disagreement in the absence of various problems;

- the degree of cohesion of family members;
- how the child is perceived and considered;
- the assembly of attitudes of members in relation to different norms and social values;
- the manner in which parents exercise their authority;
- the degree of acceptance of various children's behavior;
- the level of satisfaction felt by members of the family group;
- the dynamics of the emergence of tense and conflicting states;
- the pattern of rewards and sacrifices;
- the degree of openness and sincerity shown by members of the family group.

Most of the *behavioral and social inadequacies* of young people have their causes in educational shortages both in family life and in the function of social institutions. *Conduct disorders* can be different: difficult, disaffected, domestic, social, scholastic, etc.

*Inadequacy* is a lack of integration into the environment and the situation where it occurs; we speak of *family, school, professional or social inadequacy*. A social misfit is that individual who can not integrate into the conventional social environment in which he lives. This state has negative consequences not only on the psyche and behavior of the child or the young man, but also on the whole social complex with which he is in a perpetual conflict. The causes of *social inadequacy* differ from one individual to another according to his/her personality and from one environment to another. *Social inadequacy* is a slow, lasting process in which the influences of the environment intertwine with the reactions of the individual. It can sometimes have latent tendencies that trigger only in the event of incidents or conditions (eg parental divorce, or the death of a parent - can radically change a child's behavior).

The process of social inadequacy is favoured by many causes, many of which are found in the family environment in which the child lives. Therefore, a brief overview of family situations generating deviant behaviors in children is required. For a better and more complete understanding of the influence of the family environment on the pro-social or pro-delinquent behavior of the child, it is necessary to present the educational styles.

It has been found that the multitude of educational climate is organized around two axes:

1. *authority - liberalism or constraint – permissiveness axis;*
2. *love- hostility or attachment – rejection axis.*

In the case of the first axis, there are used indicators which reflect:

- *the limits and constraints imposed by parents on the children's activity;*
- *responsibilities assigned to children;*
- *how parental control is exercised;*
- *the rigor with which rules are applied and controlled, etc.*

For the second axis, the indicators reflect:

- *the degree of parents' involvement in the activity of the child;*

- *the help that parents provide to the child;*
- *the time the parents dedicate to the child;*
- *receptivity towards his emotional states and needs;*

While combining the two variables - parental control (1) and parental support (2), most authors have identified three functional patterns of parental action:

- *permissive model;*
- *authoritarian model;*
- *authorized model.*

The first one, the permissive model, is characterized by the low level of control associated with identification of the parent with the emotional states of the child. It is subject to few rules of conduct and few responsibilities, and the way it responds to parental expectations is subject to poor control. Therefore, parents strive to understand the needs of the child and to respond appropriately to these needs. The second model, i.e the authoritarian model, is characterized by a high level of control, but this level is associated with a great support for the child's activity, and there are imposed principles and rules of inviolable conduct. The values that parents systematically transmit to children are: *authority, tradition, work, order, discipline*. The third model, the authorized model - is characterized by a systemic control, and it combines this control with strong parental support. Parents form rules and control their observance, but they do not impose these rules, and remain open to verbal dialogues with children, explaining to them the reasons why the rules must be respected and the situations in which they apply, thus stimulating the autonomy of their thought.

Expert studies indicate a correlation between *the educational model and the social class*. Thus, upper classes generally practice a light educational model that allows the free development of children's personality and the manifestation of their autonomy, and educational constraints are poor.

However, there are constraints in all social classes, and in each of them there is a tendency of evolution towards *permissiveness*.

However, the correlations between the educational model and the social class are far from being perfect. Another feature is the family's internal structure. In 1980, the French sociologist J. Lautrey confirms the hypothesis of the educational style's dependence to the way the family is organized. He builds three types of families:

1. **poorly structured families** - which show little regularity to the child, the rules being almost absent;
2. **families with a rigid structure** - placing the child in front of rules whose application does not allow any exception;
3. **families with a thin structure** - providing the child with regularity and flexible rules applicable to the situation.

So, it can be said that the family environment can be positive or negative, i.e "good" or "bad" and it interposes as a filter between the educational influences practiced by the parents and the psycho-behavioral acquisitions made at the level of the personality of the child.

The positive family environment favors the fulfillment of all functions of the marital and family couple at high efficiency rates. In the middle of the family, the individual is awaited, preferred, valued, respected, asked for opinion or advice, and if all these become motivational factors together, they will

increase the degree of integration of his/her life behavior and family activity, and at the same time, will increase the unity and cohesion of the family group.

Through this presentation of the family environment, it can be noticed that the family is the first and the most powerful environment in which the child socializes, moving from the state of **dependence** to the state of **independence**. Also, it can be concluded that the particular influence that the family environment exerts on the behavior and development of the child acts in a double direction. Through its permanent and coherent character, the family is an educative environment with key formative valences essential for the normal development of the child, but in the case of a poor environment, it disadvantages the child's education, its normal development, and generates the risk of inadequacy. In today's society, the *typical nuclear family which is numerically reduced* in spouses and their unmarried children is threatened by the *atypical nuclear family* (such as the single-parent family consisting of a single parent and child, the family without descendants, the family rebuilt through marriage, concubinage, etc.) and the non-nuclear life styles (celibate, divorced, grandparents-grandchildren cohabitation, aunts-grandnephews cohabitation etc.).

The main causes of endangering of the typical family are: the dynamics of modern life, professional status, material insecurity, more and more complex medical conditions, cohabitation accidents, the labor market (death, detention, etc.).

These deep changes in the family have even generated a new terminology that attempts to explain the new and complex family reality. Roger Mucchielli, like other psychologists and sociologists, calls *the family desertism* -an environment stabilized on tension and conflict, an environment marked by attitudinal deficiencies generated by precarious living conditions and traumatic events such as death, disability, divorce, abandon, etc. This environment affects cohabitation relationships between spouses, parents and children, threatening family unity and balance. Conflict stress is the source of profound suffering that marks each member of the family and makes it a formal and traumatic cohabitation. The unnatural behavior of the "frustrated mother"- excessively authoritative behavior, anxious, inconsistent, neurotic, hyperprotector and unnatural behavior of the father, violent, neurotic - all these wrong attitudes of parents towards children's behavior, are behaviors that will in turn generate , in tandem, aggressive, destructive behaviors and social inadequacies that can end in multiple failure (psychological, cultural, professional, social).

A positive family environment, characterized by consistency, balance and security is the environment that meets the needs of safety, protection, social affiliation and prestige. The unity, balance and harmony of family life are challenged by some stressful events (misunderstandings, failures, illnesses) that can occur at any time within the family.

When cohesion resources do not resist these stressful events, tensions and permanent misunderstandings generate the phenomenon called *family desertism*, which seriously damages family relationships. *Positive (cordial) relations* of attraction, love, understanding, solicitude, respect, friendship, as well as their opposite - relationships of division, hatred, indifference, with devastating consequences for all members can be established within the family.

Due to the complex conditions of family life - emotional lability and confusion, successes and school failures, professional, right or wrong feelings of infidelity, achievements or material difficulties – can even occur paradoxical changes of emotional relationships.

Thus, the relations of attraction are transformed into hostile relations, and the hostile relations in relations of attraction, the relations of comprehension are transformed into relations of division, and

the relations of division in affective relations of understanding and so the relation of love transforms into relations of hate.

Once established these contradictory relationships, they will deeply put a mark on communication between and within generations. In extreme situations of misunderstanding and conflict, the family breakdown and the trauma of separation occur and they will affect each of the family members and the child in particular.

It is well known that mono parenthood and in particular that resulting from divorce, generates a poorly educated family environment, which is generally correlated with a decrease of educational activity and especially with a lower efficiency of educational efforts.

These complicated situations of family life apply to a person with essential special needs: the child. According to French psychologist Henri Wallon (quoted by I. Mitrofan and N. Mitrofan), for the child, the family is an *existential and fundamental* problem, a problem of to be or not to be, and who is placed by its nature, in a group designed to ensure his/her support, security, first education and his/her further social path. The family environment becomes a framework of material, spiritual and moral environment in which individuals are formed as social actors, as the family is the closest and most appropriate medium of intellectual and emotional structure for children's personality.

Specialists in the field of analysis and intervention on the family group have come to a common conclusion: among all the backgrounds that influence human development (family, school, friends group, mass media), the family has some of the most important tasks, building as well the affective, social and cultural universe of the adult-to be.

Therefore, defective family environments present the risk of favoring or obstructing the normal development of children.

It is extremely useful to be aware of the specific characteristics of the family environment in the prophylactic and therapeutic intervention in order to prevent and cure the conflicting relations that are unfavorable to the balance of each member of the family and the child in particular. Thus, the following types of deficiency family environment are distinguished in the literature:

- *rigid family environment;*
- *the libertine family environment;*
- *the naive family environment;*
- *the anxiogenic family environment;*
- *the conflict family environment;*
- *the environment of disorganized families.*

**In conclusion, the deficiencies of the family environment** (taking into consideration this type of family) do not favor the normal and balanced development of children. Although it does not only lead to negative consequences on development in terms of social maturity of children, the deficiencies of the family environment present a great risk in the development of the adult-to be. The risk lies in further unfulfilment of young people from a socio-cultural point of view at the level of their capacities and aspirations.

Risk can also be reflected in delinquency or other forms of deviation, having as its starting point the imitation of defects of social achievement and civic integration. On the other hand, the causes of socio-professional failure and delinquency of parents affect the harmonious development of the child.

Of course there are cases that do not confirm these situations, there are cases in which the defects and vice of young people cannot find their explanation in the family lifestyle, but in the suggestive nature lying under the harmful influence of the extra-family environment.

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