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Delinquency and Solutions

The rate of teenager delinquency is increasing in recent years, which can cause many severe problems to society and hinder its development. The three most important social environments for adolescents are family, school, and peers. Since adolescents spend most of their time in these environments, their development depends on developing relationships with the people involved in them (Jang, 2006, p.644). Therefore, Agnew (2012) claims that the teenage criminal behaviors can be caused by influences of family, school, and peers (p. 35). Nonetheless, while the main cause of the increasing rate of juvenile delinquency remains unknown, analyzing and examining the efficiency and limitation of each scheme are important in understanding how society can best reduce teenage crime. There are three solutions and recommendations that have been agreed upon by the public: promoting education, stressing healthy peer interaction, and encouraging good family condition. Being a correlated issue, some people believe that promoting education is the most effective solution to address teenage crime, while some others are insisted on strong bond with good peers; however, providing teenager with a better family environment is potentially the best solution.

Acknowledging that there are various kinds of teenage delinquency, each of them can cause severely negative results to society and individuals. Chowdhury et al. (2012) states that a study conducted on thirty teenagers who had have criminal behaviors shows that about forty percent of them kept arms or involved in stealing and drug addiction (p. 6). Moreover, they further note that families of delinquent youth will be labeled as delinquent families, and when juvenile offenders get out of reform center, they will be still involved in criminal activity (p.5). Consequently, comparing solutions for addressing the high rate of juvenile delinquency is important and necessary because such possible solutions are often ineffective and negatively impacts teenager’s personal development, their family, and the construction of a harmonious society.

Perhaps the most common solution that is proposed for reducing teenage crime rate is the promotion of school education. The teenager's involvement in school already reflects their tendency to crime. Li et al. (2011) claims that relative to their peers, students who enter adolescence with lower levels of behavioral and emotional engagement tend to be more likely to begin substance use and delinquency, or more likely to begin such behavior later in life, than adolescents with higher levels of school engagement (p. 1189). Therefore, regardless of the degree of school engagement of teenagers, it is always better to encourage more young people to attend school.

To be more specific about the benefits of being educated in a school, the school's living arrangements are reasonable and healthy, and students are given information about the disadvantages of bad habits. Cassel and Russel (2001) states that the school system will ensure that students have good eating and sleeping habits, and that every student is aware of the disadvantages of using substances that are harmful to health, like alcohol and tobacco (p. 428). Thus, it seems that attendance at school can at least instill in teenagers healthy living habits and provide them with basic information about harmful substances. Moreover, schools can provide many extra-curricular activities to help young people develop better personalities and stronger wills. Cassel and Russel (2001) explain that participating in extracurricular activities gives them a chance to express themselves and release their emotions (p. 249). Besides that, in a group or team, a teenager's victory won by inferior means are not favored, which can develop a sense of fairness in young people (p. 248). Considering how promoting school education and management positively functions on teenagers’ personal development and living habits, it is reasonable to believe that this method will help reduce rate of teenage delinquency to a certain degree.

Encouraging teenagers to go to school will help teenagers have better character and habit and thus decreases their tendency to crime, but it additionally has potential dark side. Promoting school education means make more teenagers to live and study with each other. McCord et al. (2020) claims that schools can become places where youths who are likely to have criminal behaviors are gathered, and school control may not work on them, which will have a negative impact on other young people and even lead to criminal tendencies as well (p.17). Since teenagers need to live with each other in school most of the time, their behaviors are more likely to be influential to each other by frequent interactions. Khanhkham et al. (2020) state that the National Education Statistics Center claims that in the U.S., more than half of the public schools have records about personal attack and assaults, and other studies report that 90% of high schools have records about violence. (p. 933). More interaction between teenagers and their peers can result in more conflicts that are likely to be criminal behaviors. Therefore, although promoting school education can reduce the rate of teenage crime to a certain degree and other factors, like negative peer influence, can be affected by this measure and may cause the teenage crime rate to increase, which makes it rather ineffective.

Providing a more effective outcome than the promotion of education as a means to reduce juvenile delinquency, stressing healthy peer interaction has been suggested as a way to reduce the rate of teenage delinquency. Peer influencing is a more essential way for teenager’s behaviors to be impacted, since teenagers spend much time with their peers. Liu (2000) states that when peers are supportive and predisposed to delinquent behavior or are already delinquent, young people are more likely to have criminal behaviors by themselves (p.511). Teenager’s behavior can be influenced regardless the kind of peers’ behavior. Young and Meerman (2013) claim that according to social learning theory, adolescents will adapt to the behavior of their peers or adhere to the beliefs of their peer group, even if it is wrong (p. 338). Therefore, since peers’ behaviors can deeply influence teenager’s behaviors, keeping teenagers away from peers that have criminal behaviors or tendency to crime can effectively prevent teenager from learning criminal behaviors and thus reduce the rate of juvenile delinquency. Moreover, if teenagers can be aware of the importance of having healthy peer interaction, they are able to have better personal development in school even if there are many peers who have criminal tendencies living with them. For this reason, stressing teenager to have heathier peer interaction is a better solution than education promotion on reducing teenage criminal rate.

Having better interaction with peers is able to rate of juvenile delinquency; however, encouraging better family environment and condition is the most promising solution for addressing increasing teenage criminal rate. By improving the condition of family environment, the possibility for teenager to conduct criminal behaviors can be decreased effectively. The discordant family environment can make teenagers to be influenced by peers’ improper behaviors easier. Mowen and Boman (2018) state that family conflicts have a strong connection with young people and their peers who commit crimes (p.286). Moreover, a lack of parental control can also lead to frequent interactions between teenagers and their delinquent peers. Keijsers et al. (2012) point out that if parental control of the adolescent does not match the needs of the adolescent's personality development, contact with peers will be increased and, therefore, these adolescents are more likely to come into contact with delinquent peers (p. 662). If parents have a good relationship with each other, they can spend more time on regulating teenagers instead of having conflict with each other. Henneberger et al. (2013) claim that parental supervision of adolescents can advise them on making friends and steer them away from contact with delinquent peers (p. 1657). Therefore, the measure of requiring teenagers to stay away from bad peers cannot be achieved unless society improves the condition of the families of the teenagers first. It also implies that providing teenagers with a better family environment can be more effective in reducing the rate of teenage delinquency, since it can ensure that teenagers have a better personal development, as well as heathier peer interaction.

For society to reduce the rate of juvenile delinquency, three measures have been examined. Promotion of school education has been considered, but its effectiveness can be reduced by negative influences from peers in school. Stressing healthy peer interaction has also been suggested, but it cannot be utilized unless teenagers have healthy and intact family environment first. It seems that, after considering the various possible measures that have been offered and compared for the problem of efficiency, improving teenager’s family environment is the most workable solution for society to reduce rate of juvenile delinquency.

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