

## Domestic Violence and Adolescent Delinquency

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Received: 18/11/2024

Published: 05/05/2025

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### Abstract:

The desire to study the topic of "Domestic Violence and Adolescent Delinquency" arose in order to demonstrate that one of the most important causes and primary motivations that drive adolescents to delinquency is domestic violence. Through this study, we aim to understand the relationship between domestic violence and delinquency in adolescents, to understand how domestic violence and delinquency affect adolescents, and to understand how domestic violence affects the inability to adapt.

We developed hypotheses for this research, most of which relate to domestic violence leading to the emergence of delinquency in adolescents. We relied on the clinical approach to study, observation, and interviews, in addition to the Lewis Corman Family Drawing Test. The study concluded that domestic violence leads to the emergence of deviant behaviors during adolescence.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, delinquency, adolescents

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### I. Problem Statement:

The family constitutes the foundational social institution tasked with the responsibilities of upbringing and normative regulation. It represents the initial social unit to which the child belongs and within which essential interpersonal interactions take place. The role of the family is pivotal in the development of the child's personality, as well as in the preservation of their psychological, social, and physiological equilibrium.

Furthermore, the family acts as a guiding force in behavioral formation and in the cultivation of individual potential. When a family is established on secure and

supportive grounds, it fosters strong emotional connections and psychological alignment between the child and the parental figures.

Conversely, disruptions within the family structure, particularly parental abuse, whether physical, psychological, sexual, or characterized by severe neglect, have a detrimental effect on the child's emotional and personality stability. Such adversities expose the child to conditions that jeopardize their well-being, emotional state, and mental health. This disruption is directly linked to the deterioration of the parent-child relational dynamic.

Jell (1975) defines child abuse as “the deliberate use of cruelty and violence, not incidental or accidental, by any party responsible for the child's care, whether parents, social institutions, or individuals, with the aim of harming the child or obstructing their healthy development” (Taha Abdel Azim Hussein, 2008, p. 42). Wolfe (1998) describes child abuse as “psychological and physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and neglect inflicted on children under the age of 18 by individuals responsible for their care” (Taha Abdel Azim Hussein, 2008, p. 42).

### **Main Hypothesis:**

- \_ Domestic violence contributes to the development of delinquent behavior in adolescents.

### **2. Sub-Hypotheses:**

- \_ Domestic violence increases the likelihood of adolescents running away from home.
- \_ Domestic violence contributes to the initiation of substance abuse.

### **3. Study Objectives:**

This study is designed to fulfill the following objectives:

- \_ To investigate the correlation between domestic violence and adolescent delinquency.
- \_ To assess the impact of domestic violence on the adolescent's adaptive functioning.

- To analyze the behavioral consequences of domestic violence, particularly in relation to delinquency and juvenile deviance.

#### 4. Definition of Key Concepts:

##### 4.1. Domestic Violence:

Domestic violence is one of the most significant and dangerous forms of violence. It has garnered considerable attention due to the pivotal role of the family as the foundation of society and its most essential structure.

Domestic violence represents a pattern of aggressive behavior in which a dominant individual exerts power and control over a weaker family member to fulfill personal goals, using all forms of violence, physical, verbal, or emotional. It is not necessarily limited to parental figures; the perpetrator may be any dominant family member. It is not surprising, therefore, that an aging or debilitated parent might become a victim of domestic violence.

Thus, domestic violence encompasses various forms of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse committed by a dominant family member against weaker members, resulting in physical, psychological, or social harm.

##### Forms of Domestic Violence:

- **Physical Violence:** This is considered one of the most visible forms of abuse against a child. It can be defined as: “Physical injuries resulting from beating, ranging from minor bruises to bone fractures and internal bleeding that may lead to death. It includes hitting with the hand, kicking with the foot, pulling the hair, burning, biting, and strangulation” (Bachir Maamria, 2009, p. 12).
- **Psychological Violence:** Emotional or psychological abuse is among the most dangerous and widespread forms of mistreatment in human society, and one of the most difficult to identify. Despite this, it receives the same attention as physical abuse, perhaps due to the challenge of proving its occurrence. It consists of the failure to provide the child with the emotional support and care necessary for healthy emotional, psychological, and social development. It

includes any behavior by parents or caregivers that conflicts with the child's psychological well-being or impedes their psychological and social growth.

- **Sexual Violence:** This involves engaging the child in sexual activities that they do not understand. According to the American Medical Association, child sexual abuse consists of engaging in sexual behaviors with a child who is completely unprepared and incapable of giving consent. This type of abuse may involve deception, the use of force, or coercion. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal, or emotional, and includes:
  - \_ Exhibitionism, where the abuser exposes their genitals to the child or forces the child to watch another child's sexual behavior.
  - \_ Sexual harassment, such as rubbing, fondling, and sexually kissing the child.
  - \_ Rape, involving the forced sexual intercourse with the child (Hassan Abu Riyash et al., 2006, pp. 96–97).
- **Severe Neglect:** This refers to the failure to meet the child's basic needs, such as depriving the child of food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, provided that this deprivation is not due to poverty or an inability to provide. Forms of neglect include physical, educational, and emotional neglect (Walid Hamada, 2008, p. 42).
- **Operational Definition:** This includes all forms of treatment that result in serious harm to the child by parents or guardians, whether through neglect, emotional deprivation, physical abuse, or psychological abuse.

#### 4.2. Adolescence:

There are many definitions of adolescence, each shaped by the perspective of the scholar who studied a specific aspect of this stage. According to Winnicott, adolescence is a “normal pathological state,” and it is natural for the adolescent to encounter problems during this stage, it is actually abnormal not to experience them. Stanley Hall defines adolescence as “a phase of life in which a person’s behavior is marked by intense emotions, strong feelings, and severe tensions” (Ahmed Mohamed El-Zoghbi, 2001, p. 318).

Stanley Hall emphasized the emotional side of adolescent life and the intense tensions and upheavals it involves, sometimes described as a crisis in an adolescent's life. Jean Piaget, on the other hand, focused on the intellectual and cognitive aspect of adolescence. For him, adolescence represents the age at which an individual becomes integrated into the adult world, no longer perceiving themselves as inferior to older individuals but as equals, at least in terms of rights (Sami Mohamed Melhem, 2004, p. 314).

From the psychoanalytic perspective, led by Freud, adolescence is seen as a period of psychological imbalance due to the resurgence of libidinal drives. The superego weakens under the pressure of harmful id impulses, leading the adolescent to engage in various forms of aggressive and deviant behavior (Ahmed Mohamed El-Zoghbi, 2010, p. 28).

**Operational Definition:** Adolescence refers to the changes that occur in a child's life, whether physical, psychological, intellectual, social, or sexual, during the transition from childhood to adulthood and maturity.

### **Forms of Adolescence:**

Adolescence takes several forms, the most important of which are:

1. **Well-adjusted Adolescence:** This form is characterized by calmness, moderation, and avoidance of violent traits, intense tensions, or emotional outbursts. It is also marked by harmony with parents, the family, and the external community. Stability and balanced gratification of desires are among its features, along with a complete detachment from fantasy and daydreaming, and the absence of religious doubt.
2. **Withdrawn and Introverted Adolescence:** This form is distinguished by introversion and self-centeredness, hesitation, shyness, feelings of inferiority, excessive self-sexualization, and a tendency toward religious extremism in search of psychological relief and liberation from guilt, leading to isolation and seclusion.
3. **Aggressive and Rebellious Adolescence:** This type is marked by rebellion and revolt against the family and school environment, and against all forms of authority over the adolescent. It may also include deviant sexual behaviors, as

the rebellious adolescent engages in unlawful sexual relationships. Feelings of injustice and lack of recognition from others push the adolescent toward fantasy as a means to construct a personal, imagined world. It is also expressed through aggressive behaviors toward siblings, peers, and teachers.

4. **Delinquent Adolescence:** In this form, the adolescent displays complete moral disintegration, psychological collapse, anti-social behavior, and a disregard for societal norms.

### 4.3. Delinquency:

Delinquency refers to behavior that deviates from the generally accepted and established norms of individual conduct within the social system. It denotes behaviors that are socially disapproved or unacceptable to a degree that they exceed the limits of tolerance within the local community (Samia Mohamed Gaber, 2004, p. 550).

#### Categories of Delinquents:

Identifying delinquents is a highly important task, as it helps distinguish between actual delinquents and quasi-delinquents.

1. **Quasi-delinquents:** These are individuals who commit frequent minor misdeeds that do not cause harm to others. Many young people boast about reckless acts that do not result in visible harm to themselves or to society.
2. **True Delinquents or Criminals:** These are individuals who habitually engage in criminal acts punishable by law and society, and which cause harm to others. Their actions may be carried out within organized groups such as gangs or terrorist groups, or may occur individually (Mohamed Thabet, 1992, p. 88).

#### Operational Definition:

Delinquency refers to any behavior by an individual that violates moral standards, societal norms, and religious values, and is categorically rejected by society. It is considered deviant behavior.

#### Applied Section:

### **First: Study Methodology**

We chose to use the clinical method, as it is the most suitable for the subject of this study. *Wirmer* defines it as “a research method based on the use of findings from the examination of many patients, studied one after another, in order to derive general principles suggested by observations of their competencies and deficiencies” (Louchahi, 2010, p. 155).

### **Second: Study Scope and Sample**

The study was conducted at a rehabilitation center in the Wilaya of Annaba. We selected two cases that met the criteria of our study, namely adolescents who had committed various forms of delinquent behavior.

### **Third: Study Tools:**

1. ***The Clinical Interview***: A dynamic relationship and verbal exchange between two or more individuals (Melhem, 2001, p. 272). It is one of the tools used by clinical specialists to discuss different aspects of the patient’s behavior to uncover and understand the psychological factors underlying the individual's current condition.
2. ***Observation***: This involves identifying distinguishing traits, especially those difficult to interpret due to their emotional nature. It concerns both conscious and unconscious emotional expressions that help the examiner understand what the subject is experiencing at a given moment.
3. ***The Family Drawing Test (Louis Corman)***: This is a projective test that enables individuals to express themselves freely, revealing their internal conflicts, fantasies, and both conscious and unconscious thoughts.

The first concept of the family drawing test originated with *Torab* in 1935, based on his interpretation of children's drawings. He saw family drawings as a positive outlet through which children could express family-related conflicts. *Mourisse* later refined the application of the test, emphasizing that the test instruction should be: “Draw your family.” The child should be observed closely during the drawing process, and every detail of the drawing should be carefully noted and recorded.

The Family Drawing Test reveals:

- \_ The subject's emotional interests.
- \_ Significant conflicts between the child and a family member.
- \_ Conscious and unconscious identifications.
- \_ Ego defenses against anxiety.
- \_ Object relations and the Oedipus complex.
- \_ Insight into family-related adjustment disorders (Louis Corman, 1990, p.17).

The instruction for the test is for the psychologist to present the child with a blank sheet of paper, a pencil, and colored pencils, and then ask the child to “Draw your family.” Before conducting the test, several interviews with the child must be held to establish an atmosphere of trust and emotional safety. Once the child finishes drawing their family members, the psychologist asks them to draw an imaginary family and poses the following questions:

- Who is the kindest person in your family, and why?
- Who is the least kind, and why?
- Who is the happiest, and why?
- Who is the least happy, and why?
- And you, would you want to be part of this family? (Louis Corman, 1990, p.1).

## **Forth : Case Presentation**

### **Case One:**

Name: Mourad

Age: 14

Gender: Male

Educational level: 3rd year of middle school

Number of siblings: 2

Birth order: 3<sup>rd</sup>

Father's occupation: Unemployed

Mother: Deceased

Economic status: Average

### **Interview Summary for Case One:**

Mourad is an adolescent living in a five-member household consisting of his father and stepmother. He dropped out of school in the third year due to severe family issues and difficult life circumstances. Mourad had a relatively stable childhood until the death of his mother. He stated, “Ever since my mom died, everything went downhill. Her death ruined my life. My stepmother is always punishing me; she made life unbearable in that house. I started staying out from night to night just to avoid seeing her. I live alone now.

My dad forgot he even had a son. He insults and curses me, treats me harshly, and his wife turns him against me. He kicked me out of the house, I slept in the streets for four days. I met a group of people and joined them. You know what happens in the streets, you see everything. I started with glue and pills, then tried everything. I followed that group because there was no one to advise me until it was too late. Everything was lost, my education, my life. Now I just hustle to bring in some money.”

### **Direct Observation of the Subject:**

During the interview, the following observations were made:

\*A miserable expression.

\*A sad mood.

\*Frequent sighs.

### **Family Drawing Test:**

#### ***Real Family:***

#### **Line-Level Analysis:**

Based on Mourad’s drawing of his family, the following observations were noted:

- He began drawing from left to right, which suggests a maternal focus and an orientation toward the past.
- The use of heavy lines indicates intensity and hostility.
- The lack of balance in the drawing reflects impulsive tendencies and emotional vulnerability, as well as a need for social connection.

### **Shape-Level Analysis:**

- Gender differences are shown through hairstyle, indicating developmental maturity.
- The family members are drawn far apart, reflecting a desire for closer interpersonal relationships.
- Some lines are straight, suggesting reality-based aggressive defense mechanisms.
- The depiction of hair, especially in adolescence, reflects sexual expression and narcissism, as well as a desire to draw attention.
- Open hands are a sign of a need for safety and emotional care.

### **Content-Level Analysis:**

- The absence of color implies emotional emptiness, anxiety, and inhibition.
- Open hands express a longing for security.
- A small head indicates difficulty in communication.
- The mouth is drawn to reflect aggression.
- Long upper limbs suggest ambition.
- Drawing himself far from the family illustrates his rejection of living with them.
- The mother was drawn first, indicating her importance and status within the family.

### **Imaginary Family:**

#### **Line-Level Analysis:**

- Starting the drawing from left to right indicates a gradual developmental progression.
- The placement of the drawing in the upper section of the paper reflects a wide imaginative capacity.

#### **Shape-Level Analysis:**

- The parents are drawn close together, suggesting a sense of bonding and a cognitive-emotional pattern.
- Gender differentiation is shown through hairstyles and clothing, reflecting psychological growth and maturity.
- Open hands again suggest a craving for affection and emotional security.

#### **Content-Level Analysis:**

- The lack of colors once again signals emotional emptiness.
- Wide-open eyes indicate fear and anxiety.
- Beginning with the mother's figure underscores her high value in his emotional world.
- Omitting himself from the drawing points to a rejection of belonging to the family unit.
- Not drawing the father's hands implies diminished paternal value and an unconscious rejection of the father figure.
- His brother is drawn with large eyes, signifying strong emotional attachment to him.

### **General Analysis of Case One:**

Through the interviews conducted, along with the application of the Family Drawing Test and direct observations of the subject, it became evident that the adolescent is a victim of parental abuse, particularly physical abuse in the form of beatings. As Mourad stated: "My father beats me."

However, the more critical issue is neglect, as the child has been deprived of paternal affection following the death of his mother and the loss of her nurturing presence. In contrast, he is exposed to mistreatment by his stepmother. He expressed: "She ruined my life, I hated that house, I started staying out from night to night." This reflects his attempt to escape, to drift into the streets, and to become involved with harmful peer groups, leading eventually to substance abuse.

From this, we conclude that the subject has suffered from emotional deprivation. Norbert Sillamy defines this as "an identification and insufficiency in affection; humans need to love and feel loved in order to sense their own existence. A person's need for love and care exceeds that of other living beings" (N. Silamy, 1990, p. 40). This deprivation led to psychological frustration. The abuse and severe lack of paternal tenderness, coupled with the negative treatment from the stepmother, made Mourad feel rejected within his own family.

School dropout, in this case, is the result of a lack of family support and social exclusion. The father's mistreatment, emotional deprivation, and absence of care led the subject to escape reality through drug use. The lack of intimate relationships within the family leaves children vulnerable to addiction.

Thus, drug use is interpreted here as a coping mechanism, a way to escape the harsh reality he lives in and a means of seeking psychological balance and stability.

### **Case Two:**

Name: Ryad

Age: 13

Gender: Male

Educational Level: 3rd year of middle school

Number of Siblings: 4

Birth Order: 4<sup>th</sup>

Father's Occupation: Unemployed

Mother: None

Economic Status: Average

### **Interview Summary for Case Two:**

Ryad is an adolescent living in a six-member household consisting of his parents, two sisters, and one brother. He said: "My situation is just like some of the other teens whose parents don't care about them. What can I say? It's a mess. I'm just an extra in this life, no home, no school. Misery follows me everywhere. My suffering started the day I had to leave school because of our poor circumstances. I found myself in the street, surrounded by bad influences. One thing led to another until drugs got ahold of me. I started with weed to forget the pain I was in, to forget my worries, especially the family problems. My father fights with my mother every day. He blames her, says she's the one who spoiled me, gives me money, and then starts yelling at both of us.

He hits her and hits me. He's harsh, not tender. He doesn't talk to me. It kills me to see a kid walking with his dad, calling to him. I have no one to support me or call my name. I hate everything. God willing, I'll stop this garbage that ruined my future and destroyed me, at least to make my mother happy. My friends' parents supported them with money, with love, but I had nothing. I tried to come back, and they threw me out again. No one cared for me."

### **Direct Observation of the Subject:**

During the interview, the following observations were made:

- Dark circles under the eyes due to drug use.
- A sad mood.

### **Family Drawing Test:**

#### **Real Family:**

#### **Line-Level Analysis:**

In Ryad's drawing of his family, the following observations were noted:

- The drawing is centered, indicating a deep need for safety and protection.
- Thin lines suggest the child's heightened sensitivity and perception of harshness.
- The use of heavy pressure while drawing the father indicates anxiety.
- The drawing is positioned on the right side of the paper, symbolizing rejection of current reality.

#### **Shape-Level Analysis:**

- The drawing is primitive, reflecting a regression to early developmental stages.
- Open hands express a need for security and care.
- Numerous straight lines point to reality-based aggressive defense mechanisms.
- The depiction of hair carries sexual connotations, particularly in adolescence. It also reflects narcissism and a desire for attention.

#### **Content-Level Analysis:**

- The eyes are the windows of the soul and are key tools of connection.
- The mouth is drawn as a line, indicating repression and inner pressure.
- The head symbolizes the ego's center.
- The mother and two brothers are drawn first, and the mother is colored, this highlights her emotional importance and elevated status within the family.

#### ***Imaginary Family:***

#### **Line-Level Analysis:**

- The drawing occupies nearly the entire page, indicating expansive inner vitality.
- It starts from left to right, signaling progressive emotional development.

#### **Shape-Level Analysis:**

- Gender differences are represented in hairstyle and clothing, suggesting a degree of psychological maturity and emotional liveliness.
- The parents are drawn close together, symbolizing a strong wish for parental unity.
- Open hands again reflect the desire for security, affection, and emotional comfort.

#### **Content-Level Analysis:**

- Drawing himself apart from the family indicates rejection of being part of that familial unit.
- A torso shaped like a square signals anxiety symptoms.
- Wide-open eyes symbolize fear and terror.
- The absence of color again reflects emotional emptiness and deprivation.

#### **General Analysis of Case Two:**

Following the interview and the application of the Family Drawing Test with Ryad's case, and after conducting our analysis, it became clear that the subject suffers from neglect. As he stated, "Our situation is not good, my friends all take private lessons, and their parents support them." From this, we deduce that the subject has endured emotional deprivation, which led to severe psychological frustration. As Anna Freud explains, "Certain parental attitudes may result in frustration, particularly when the family environment fails to provide protection from anxiety and fear."

The subject also expressed psychological pressure arising from family conflicts, particularly between his parents. He said, "My father blames my mother for ruining my education. He keeps insulting her and beating her. I've had enough." This demonstrates the emotional toll of parental conflict.

Furthermore, the rejection and marginalization he experienced within the school environment caused him deep emotional wounds as a result of dropping out. The lack of attention, carelessness, and mistreatment from the father and the school environment, combined with familial conflict, led to a behavioral disorder manifested in his withdrawal into the streets and subsequent drug use.

These behaviors served as an attempt to escape internal conflicts, a response to the painful reality he lived, and a form of retaliatory reaction to his experiences. As Mohamed Abdel Moumen noted, “Neglect leads to feelings of guilt imposed by the parents and a sense of being unwanted, which gives rise to various forms of disturbed behavior.”

### **General Analysis of Results:**

Adolescent drug use is often underestimated by society; however, it conceals deep-seated and perilous psychological roots. At the forefront of these causes is parental maltreatment and neglect, particularly from figures of authority such as parents and teachers. These experiences frequently lead to withdrawal, escape behaviors, and ultimately, substance abuse.

Based on data collected through interviews, direct observation, and the administration of the Family Drawing Test for both subjects, the findings clearly indicate that the adolescents in question had experienced physical and psychological abuse within the family environment. Among the various forms of mistreatment, neglect, especially from both parental and educational figures, was found to be the most detrimental. Such neglect exerts a lasting psychological toll on the adolescent.

At this sensitive developmental stage, adolescents require structured guidance, emotional support, and close monitoring from both parents and educators. The absence of sustained follow-up and the presence of overt rejection contribute significantly to the emergence of psychological and behavioral disorders.

Parental abuse has a marked effect on the adolescent’s emotional equilibrium, as evidenced by the emergence of symptoms such as feelings of guilt, despair, social isolation, and deviant behavior. These behavioral manifestations are indicative of a destabilized psychological state and are often precursors to substance abuse. For many adolescents, drug use becomes a dual mechanism: a retaliatory gesture against perceived injustice and a maladaptive coping strategy for alleviating emotional suffering.

Furthermore, the interlinked consequences of abuse, neglect, and addiction extend far beyond the immediate crisis, embedding long-term psychological damage. In

both examined cases, the adolescents exhibited a pronounced absence of hope and a pessimistic outlook toward the future.

### **Conclusion:**

The findings of this study unequivocally demonstrate that parental mistreatment is a serious issue with increasing prevalence, particularly among adolescents. The psychological and emotional repercussions are profound, manifesting in compromised mental stability, disrupted personality development, and enduring emotional distress.

Adolescents who are unable to process or cope with the trauma resulting from parental abuse are more likely to experience depressive symptoms and internal psychological conflict. These emotional struggles often give rise to outward expressions of aggression and anti-social behavior, which can be interpreted as a form of rebellion directed toward the broader social context. In many cases, such rebellion escalates into behavioral and psychological deviance.

Accordingly, the sub-hypotheses proposed in this study were substantiated by both cases: parental mistreatment was directly linked to adolescents fleeing the family home and resorting to drug addiction as a means of emotional release and pressure relief. Consequently, the main hypothesis was also validated: parental mistreatment leads to adolescent deviance and delinquency.

These results underscore the critical importance of parental engagement, care, and consistent supervision in supporting the adolescent's psychological and personal development. They also point to the urgent need for systematic diagnosis, psychological intervention, and the reinforcement of mechanisms that protect the fundamental rights of children and adolescents.

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