



ÇAĞ UNIVERSITY
FACULTY of ARTS & SCIENCES
PSY 264
PSYCHOLOGY of CRIME
WEEK 13

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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CHILD & CRIME

- According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child.
- Childhood and adolescence are the stages of life when social development and adjustment happen most intensely.
- In Türkiye, as in many developed countries, people avoid saying “criminal child” and instead use the term “Child Drawn into Crime.”
- This approach is based on the idea that “every child who commits a crime is also a victim.”
- Because children are still growing and developing, they often struggle to clearly tell the difference between right and wrong.
- When a child commits a crime or causes a crime, their actions should not only be analyzed legally, but also mainly through a psychological and educational (pedagogical) perspective, since their reasoning ability is not yet fully developed.

CHILD OFFENSES

- According to Article 31/1 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237:
- "Children who have not yet reached the age of 12 at the time of the act are not criminally responsible. Legal action cannot be taken against them, but child-specific protective measures may be applied.«
- In Türkiye, when individuals between the ages of 12 and 18 commit crimes, the term "child offenses" is used.
- Special courts called *Juvenile Courts* have been established mainly to deal with crimes committed by children aged 12 to 15.
- According to the law that established these courts, children and youth under the age of 18 are grouped into three categories:
 1. Under 11 years old: referred to as child
 2. 12 to 15 years old: referred to as adolescent
 3. 15 to 18 years old: referred to as juvenile

CHILD DRAWN INTO CRIME

- Studies on the causes of juvenile delinquency show that there are many different factors that can lead children to commit crimes.
- Children who are drawn into crime are often:
 - struggling with psychological problems
 - experiencing financial hardship
 - unable to adapt to social norms and rules
 - lacking opportunities to integrate into society
 - neglected by public institutions and
 - raised by parents who have been socially excluded themselves

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- Children cannot fully understand why certain rules exist or need to be followed.
 - They are still not fully socialized, and the process of learning how to live in society is not yet complete.
 - Rules often conflict with children's natural impulses and desires.
 - However, during their development, most children eventually learn to adapt to society and find balance with their environment.
- Typical characteristics of juvenile delinquency:
 1. Lack of benefit (the act usually doesn't serve a useful purpose)
 2. Committed with bad intentions
 3. Generally negative in nature

ADOLESCENCE

- Adolescence is a stage of life that includes rapid physical, psychological, and social development, marking the transition to adulthood.
- During this time, adolescents try to fit into society and gain acceptance.
- As their personality changes and matures, they start searching for new values in their surroundings and try to find direction in life.
- Delinquent behavior that may emerge during adolescence is not only a problem for the individual and family, but also a social issue that negatively affects society.
- Compared to children, adolescents tend to come up with more alternatives and evaluate situations from different perspectives.
- Due to various reasons, risky or problematic behaviors, including involvement in crime, may arise during adolescence.

ADOLESCENCE

- During this period, children's desire for independence grows, replacing parental control.
- As a result, they encounter more opportunities to engage in behaviors that are not socially accepted.
- Teenagers often want to try new and expensive pleasures—like sound systems, fashionable clothes, cars, or alcohol—even though it's hard to afford them.
- There is often a mismatch between adolescents' needs and the opportunities provided by those around them.
- Unmet needs and disappointments experienced during early childhood may later lead individuals to show socially unacceptable behavior.

ADOLESCENCE AND CRIME

- Adolescence, as an exploration period, can lead adolescents to risky behaviors that may involve danger.
- Several factors may influence an adolescent's involvement in crime, including:
 - their effort to form an identity,
 - feelings of inadequacy,
 - difficulty managing emotions,
 - a need to feel independent, or
 - other psychosocial needs.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- In addition to crimes typical of adulthood, children are also known to engage in behaviors such as skipping school, being disobedient, going out without permission, or running away from home. These are called status offenses, as they are specific to childhood and not considered crimes if committed by adults.
- Crimes committed by children during adolescence — even if they showed no problematic behavior earlier — cannot be separated from the challenges and needs specific to this developmental stage.
- The types of crimes that children commit—or are forced to commit—are in some ways different from the crimes committed by adults.
- Juvenile crimes are usually driven by the need to satisfy a specific need (like food, money, safety, etc.).
- Children cannot commit organized crimes like adults can; they are not capable of carrying out crimes in a professional or planned way.
- A significant number of children who commit crimes have actually been exposed to crime or have been victims themselves.

TYPES of JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- Delinquency caused by a dysfunctional family environment
- Delinquency linked to secondary antisocial behavior disorders
- Crimes committed due to economic hardship often involve children who have experienced long-term poverty from an early age and weigh crime as a way to survive.
- According to research findings, crimes against the person, such as murder, assault, or attempted murder, are among the most common types of crimes committed by children in Türkiye.
- When the reasons behind crimes against the person are investigated, it is seen that social issues such as blood feuds, disputes over animals or land, and “honor-based” motives are often the main causes.

TYPES of JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- Children today carry weapons more often than in the past.
- Accessibility of firearms contributes to the rise in youth violence. in the country.
- The most critical steps in the "cycle of crime" are:
 1. Age of onset (when the child first commits a crime),
 2. Increase in criminal activity,
 3. Specialization in crimes (becoming more skilled or focused in certain types of offenses),
 4. Tendency to become a habitual offender in adulthood.

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS of JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- The distinctive characteristics of the acts they commit
- The motivations behind their actions and behaviors
- The intentions and choices that guide their behaviors
- Factors such as seeking adventure, desire to try new things, lack of experience, naivety, and boredom
- Trying to prove themselves to someone they want to gain respect from
- Crimes that happen during playtime or moments of boredom
- Usually not planning the crime, but simply taking advantage of an opportunity that comes up
- Being more willing to confess the crime when caught (unlike most adults)

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS of JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (THEFT)

- Families using children to commit crimes, thinking they will receive less punishment due to their young age
- Lack of love and affection
- Lack of attention from people around them
- Being used by members of a group the child wants to join
- Get revenge on people who treated them unfairly
- Gain prestige or status

CAUSES of JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

- To prevent juvenile delinquency and help children reintegrate into society, it's crucial to understand the causes.
- Research that explores the link between children and crime has shown that a combination of factors usually drives a child toward criminal behavior.
- These factors may include social, psychological, physiological, cultural, economic, and mental influences.
- A child's personality, abilities, environmental conditions, family background, and living conditions all interact and can have negative impact.

GENDER

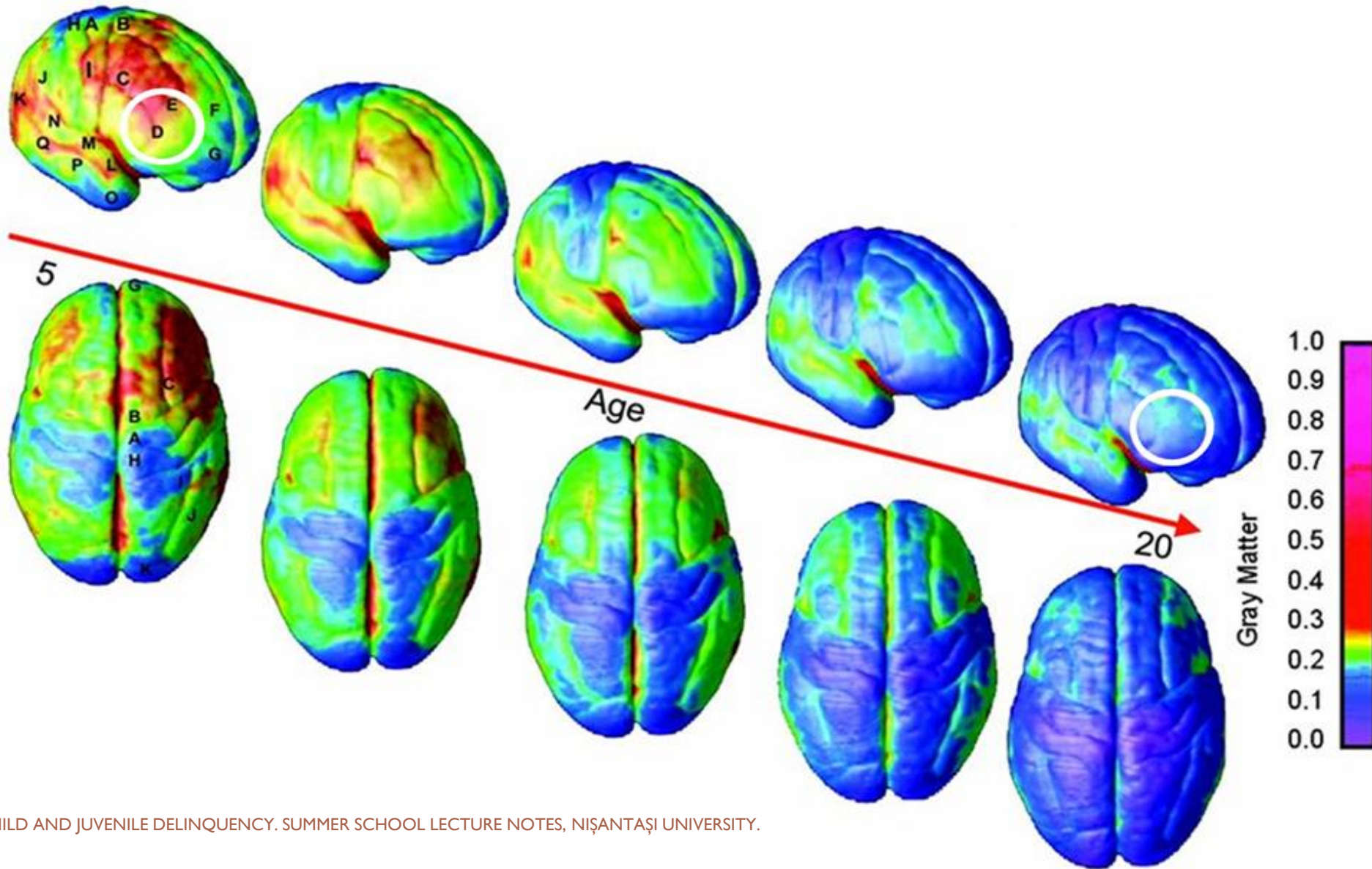
- Most research shows that boys commit more crimes than girls.
- During the socialization process, there are different role expectations for boys and girls.
- Traditional female roles include traits like warmth, protectiveness, self-sacrifice, politeness, loyalty, and being sensitive to the needs and expectations of others.
- Boys, on the other hand, are expected to show independence, competitiveness, assertiveness, success, dominance, and sometimes even aggressiveness.

AGE

- The age with the highest crime rate is 14.
- For property-related crimes, the most common age is also 14,
- For assault and sexual offenses, it is 15.
- The most important factor related to age is the onset of adolescence. With the beginning of adolescence, young people begin to question family values, behavior patterns, and lifestyle.
- They try to gain autonomy, assert themselves based on their own values, and distance themselves from their families.
- Delinquent behavior most commonly starts in early adolescence and tends to decrease as the individual moves into adulthood.

ADOLESCENCE & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- The brain continues developing throughout adolescence, and it only reaches full maturity in the early twenties.
- One important part is the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for:
 - Understanding cause-and-effect,
 - Memory,
 - Planning,
 - Emotion regulation, and
 - Impulse control — all of which are known as executive functions.
- Adolescents tend to rely more on the emotional parts of their brain when making decisions.
- The frontal lobe, which manages executive functions, is still underdeveloped in adolescents.
- The frontal lobe is also the brain region responsible for cognitive and behavioral coordination, especially related to criminal responsibility.
- Because this brain region matures much later, it's clear that criminal behaviors seen in adolescence are not usually the result of fully developed thinking or planning.



ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) & CRIME

- Children with ADHD often have trouble focusing on tasks, succeeding academically, and coordinating their thoughts and behaviors at school.
- Research shows that ADHD is not only linked to school difficulties, but in some cases, it is also associated with criminal behavior — even into adulthood.
- The main symptoms of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.
- Hyperactivity means moving around excessively in a way that is not appropriate for the child's age or the task — often without a clear purpose.
- Impulsivity may appear as acting without thinking, ignoring rules, interrupting others, or not being able to wait for one's turn.

FAMILY & CRIME

- A child, as a member of the family, develops personality, social behavior, values, and moral understanding primarily through the education and experiences within the family.
- That's why disruptions or problems in family life almost always affect children — and can sometimes draw them into crime.
- The family's influence on a child begins even before birth.
- Many cases of behavioral problems among children have been found to stem from inadequate or unhealthy early parent-child relationships.

FAMILY RELATIONS

- The type of discipline within the family
- Interaction between family members
- The presence of negative role models in the family
- Family breakdown or separation
- Distancing from the family
- The child trying to find a sense of identity outside the family
- Parental attitudes
- The intentions underlying parents' behaviors
- Behavior as a learned outcome
- The factors that influence how parents treat their children

FAMILY RELATIONS

- Even before birth, parents often form a mental image of the “ideal child” they expect.
- If the child does not meet the parents’ expectations, this may lead to a rejection attitude.
- The parents' general attitude toward the child plays a key role.
- The influence of society’s cultural values is also significant.
- Some parents enjoy their parenting role and believe they are fulfilling their responsibilities properly.
- Others feel insecure and inadequate, unsure about how to raise their children adequately.
- Parents' own childhood experiences
- Negative experiences during childhood
- The relationship between the parents (as partners)
- Conflicts and emotional distance between parents
- The overall quality of the parent-child relationship
- Feelings of inadequacy, infringement, self-blame
- As a result of tension and blame, the child may develop aggressiveness or hostility

UNWANTED CHILD

- Unwanted or unloved children may show problematic behaviors.
- The child may have a strong desire to gain love or attract attention.
- They may take revenge by directing the hostility from their parents toward others.
- They may believe they have no worth, which can lead to feelings of anxiety.
- A typical behavior of an unwanted, unloved child is aggressiveness.
- They often act in negative, argumentative, or rebellious ways.

BROKEN FAMILIES

- The absence of a family member, such as the mother, father, or both — due to death, divorce, abandonment, or separation
- Family members who struggle with substance or alcohol addiction
- Shameful situations, like a family member sent to prison
- Financial difficulties and economic hardship
- One of the most important protections for a child's mental health is living in a warm and supportive family environment.
- A broken family on its own is not enough to drive a child into crime. Other negative factors must also be present alongside family breakdown.

BROKEN FAMILIES

- Absence of the mother can lead to emotional development problems, lack of love, and eventually to behaviors against social rules.
- Learning social behaviors is based on the attachment a child feels toward his mother.
- If this bond does not develop, the child may fail to learn proper social behaviors, and violates social norms, and engages in criminal actions
- The timing of family breakdown is important.
- Especially if it happens at age 10 or younger.
- A study conducted on convicted children indicated that 70.4% of children who committed sexual offenses came from broken families.

FAMILIAL DISCIPLINE

- Harsh and inconsistent authority and discipline can be harmful.
- Using frequent and excessive violence as a method of discipline damages children.
- Research shows that children who commit crimes often have strained or rejecting relationships with their parents, and are frequently subjected to physical punishment.
- Excessive discipline may turn into a form of pressure and increases the child's aggression and tendency toward criminal behavior.

NEGATIVE ROLE MODELS IN THE FAMILY

- It is believed that criminal behavior is learned through close interaction and communication within peer groups.
- A study on convicted children found that 62% of their fathers were alcohol users.
- Children whose parents are alcohol abusers are more likely to develop alcohol dependence as a learned behavioral disorder.
- In another study conducted in America with 253 participants, it was found that the fathers of 45 boys had committed crimes, and 56% of those boys had committed the same crimes as their fathers.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FAMILY

- Low socioeconomic status
- Lack of access to health, housing, and education
- Financial hardship is the most common response, when asked about the reasons behind crime,
- One of the most comprehensive early studies on juvenile delinquency in Türkiye, conducted by Yavuzer (1981), found that 69% of convicted children came from families with low socioeconomic status.

FAMILY EDUCATION LEVEL

- Low level of education (Mother's level of education, specifically)
- Inadequacies in the child's education and development, including non-pedagogical behaviors in parenting
- Behavioral problems

THE FAMILY BEING CROWDED – NUMBER of CHILDREN

- As the number of children in the family increases, the social, emotional, and economic resources provided to them decrease.
- Parental attention and support diminish, and the child's development and supervision by parents become more limited.
- The child's needs may not be adequately met.

NEGLECT & ABUSE of CHILDREN

- In Yavuzer's (1981) study with 214 convicted children, it was found that 86.9% of their parents punished them with physical violence,
- and particularly 66.4% of the fathers were found to have applied physical punishment.
- Families of children who tend toward crime experience higher levels of domestic violence (spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, physical and emotional abuse).
- As a result of neglect and abuse; low self-esteem, guilt, high anxiety, moderate to severe depression, and strong internal conflicts are observed.
- Attempt to escape from home seems the only way to cope with the pain of neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.
- Greater difficulties at school.

BOWLBY'S 44 JUVENILE THIEVES STUDY (1944)

- The 44 thieves study was a famous study conducted by John Bowlby to assess the impact of maternal deprivation on the likelihood of delinquency in adolescence. During the study, Bowlby interviewed 44 thieves and 44 non-thieves from a juvenile delinquency center.
- To understand the importance of the mother-child relationship in the first five years of life in terms of socialization, an experiment involving 44 juvenile delinquents was conducted.
- It was believed that the major emotional problems and antisocial behavior observed in child offenders could be directly related to attachment.
- Is there a connection between maternal deprivation and delinquency in youth?
- Did these children experience any kind of separation from their families particularly during the first five years? How long were they separated?
- More than half of the juvenile delinquents were separated from their mothers for more than six months during the first five years of life.

ATTACHMENT AND CRIME RELATIONSHIP

- In the study, Bowlby found that 40% of the participants who had committed property-related crimes had been separated from their mothers within the first five years of life.
- In another study conducted with convicted adolescents, it was reported that 47.6% of the delinquent participants had been separated from their parents for various reasons, and 22% came from broken families.
- A positive relationship established with the mother plays a protective role for adolescents against negative behaviors such as aggression, theft, lying, and substance abuse.
- In addition, adolescents who form strong emotional bonds with their families were observed to accept household rules and order more than their peers with weaker family bonds.

ATTACHMENT AND CRIME RELATIONSHIP

- Adolescents showing a disorganized attachment pattern are frequently observed to exhibit physical violence and disruptive behaviors, to oppose rules impulsively, and to become suddenly angry. (*Individuals showing this disorganized type may predominantly display either the anxious or avoidant type under normal conditions, but under stress, they may show a mixture of both.)
- The probability of sexual offenses is higher in attachment disorders. Disorganized attachment disorder is considered to underlie the etiology of sexual abuse behavior.
- The basis of these individuals' sexual disorders lies in developmental stressors, low self-esteem, poor coping mechanisms, and deterioration in interpersonal relationships.

INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

- Unlike villages, cities offer numerous targets for potential offenders.
- With urbanization, especially offenses involving force and violence decrease, while property-related crimes increase.
- While first-time offenders are more frequently encountered in rural areas, crime recidivism rates are higher in large cities.

MIGRATION

- Migration from rural to urban areas leads to significant societal changes.
- Every migration exposes individuals to psychological stress.
- With migration, old systems and mechanisms dissolve, but the new ones have yet to take their place.
- Deviant behaviors emerge: delinquency, alcoholism, mental health disorders
- Maladaptation in migrant children
- The first generation carries feelings of loneliness and unconscious guilt due to separation from their roots.

MASS MEDIA

- With the widespread use of mass media, children are exposed to visual and auditory broadcasts related to crime from an early age.
- Especially violent programs/series on television can lead to faulty socialization in children.
- Children may admire the lives portrayed in violent TV shows and identify themselves with the heroes of these shows.
- The TV series hero, with their various behaviors and actions, can activate aggressive impulses in the child and make them aggressive.
- Children accessing inappropriate, illegal websites on the internet and playing violence-themed games
- According to Erdoğan's (1989) research conducted at the Elazığ Juvenile Correctional Facility on juvenile delinquency, 60% of the children had watched violence-adventure-themed movies before committing a crime.
- In Kunt's (2003) research, it was observed that 75% of the children in the Ankara Keçiören Juvenile Correctional Facility preferred to watch violence-themed films.