

Assessment of the management of girls in conflict with the law: Words and expressions of social intervention users

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Introduction

Delinquent children are stigmatized and excluded and face negative social reactions of repulsion, “*There is a conservative social tendency to stigmatize young men and children who appear in public spaces.*”¹ The process of stigmatization can go beyond this society and extend to those who work in institutions that care for children, and this social trend increases strongly when it comes to delinquent girls, due to cultural considerations related to women’s social and gender control.

Whereas the intervention of social workers requires the adoption of professional attitudes based on objectivity and impartiality; management can be influenced by social norms that may impose particular control on girls, especially if they are delinquent. This raises questions about how social workers represent them and therefore how they in turn represent empowerment. We also wonder to what extent these representations influence the support relationship as a framework for social responsibility.

From this work, we aspire to reveal the mutual social representations between girls in conflict with the law and social workers. Professional practice is largely based on the interactions between the parts of the support relationship that are determined by their social representations and the essence of the social assistance relationship is based on a variety of attitudes that determine the effectiveness of the professional practice of the social worker.

In response to these questions and relying on the analytical perspective of symbolic interactivism; We assume that:

Hypothesis 1: The social worker represents the girl in conflict with the law as the culprit, which creates communication barriers throughout the intervention process and to the helping relationship, while the social worker represents the girl in conflict with the law as a victim, which increases her dependency.

¹ Ali Jaidi, Special Intervention for Children in Conflict with the Law, Ministry of Social Affairs and United Nations Children’s Fund, Tunisia, 2008.

Hypothesis 2: Girls in conflict with the law consider that the services provided by social workers in the context of the management are circumstantial and meet only part of their material needs.

1. Symbolic Interactivism: Theoretical Framework for Analysis

According to this theory, the roles of a child, male or female, are shaped during childhood through interaction with parents, teachers, and peer groups. Men's education is based on superiority and leadership, while women's education is based on subordination, submission and obedience. A girl is therefore considered weaker and inferior than a boy, which may lead some people to consider her as needing assistance.

Interactionists focused on the interactions between an individual and others and their environment. They are based on personal and direct observations conducted in the field and attach importance to the communication and interaction between elements of the social system and consider that the interaction is influenced by norms and mental impressions.

Interactionists believe that understanding the attitudes of the individuals with whom we interact is the premise for interpreting social phenomena and that behavior is only "*product of human interaction through the use of symbols and signals.*"¹ This interaction concerns the symbolic meaning of communication and its language, signals and symbols. In this context, **Goffman**² considers that social life is a theatre in which one person's behaviour is different from another, and he learns from childhood that his social behaviour must be proportional to specific social norms.

2. Conceptual framework: the basic concepts of this research are: the aid relationship, the

professional practice and social representations

2.1. The helping relationship

The support relationship is the framework in which the support is manifested. It is a professional relationship of a human nature that unites the professional and the beneficiary.

Thus the respect of the principle of the alliance in the practices of the taking in charge of children requires efforts on the part of professionals to guarantee a work based on relationships, an accompaniment, an association whose purpose is the ultimate good of the child.

¹ Philip Jones, *Social Theories and Research Practice*, Translation of Mohammed Yassin Alkhawaja, Egypt Arab. Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2010, p. 153

² Erving Goffman, *La mise en scène de la vie quotidienne: les relations en public*, les Ed de minuit, Paris, 1973.

2.2. Social representations

What is at stake in this research is the approach of the schools of social psychology to the notion of representations that we observe first of all, in Moscovici through his study of the representations of the French of psychoanalysis.¹

Besides, **Denise Jodelet** identified social representations as: A kind of special knowledge, which in its general sense means a form of social thought and which are procedural thought models oriented towards communication, understanding and control of the social environment.”²

2.3. Professional Practice

According to Marguerite ALTET³: *Practice is the singular way of doing a person, his real, proper way of carrying out an activity. The practice is not only the set of observable acts but it involves the processes of implementation of the activity in a given situation by a person, the choices, the decision-making».*

Practice includes not only the professional activities and skills they need, but also the values, principles and ethics that guide and guide professionals to optimize their professional activities.

In this context, **Jacky Beillerot** considers that: *The concept of practice has two dimensions:*

Fundamental: Professional Activity and the Standards and Rules Governing This Activity»⁴.

It is on this basis that the professional practice of social work consists of the professional roles and activities of the social worker, on the one hand, and the ethical rules that frame them, on the other hand.

3. Methodological approach to research

We used the semi-directive interview as a data collection tool used in the qualitative approach due to methodological considerations related to its many benefits, including flexibility, given the opportunity for the researcher to intervene to interpret, explain and rephrase the questions.

¹ Serge Moscovici, *La psychanalyse, son image et son public*, PUF, 1961, Paris, p11.

² Denise Jodelet, *Représentation sociale: phénomènes, concept et théorie*, in *Psychologie sociale*, edited by Serge Moscovici, Ed PUF, Paris, 1997. p365.

³ Marguerite ALTET, “L'ANALYSE DE PRATIQUES Une démarche de Formation professionnalis”, *RECHERCHE et FORMATION* N° 35, 2000, pp.25–41.

⁴ Jacky Beillerot, *Analyse des pratiques et analyse institutionnelle*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 2001, p171.

The research group is composed of 10 social workers who work with children in conflict with the law in the defense and social integration centers of the 04 governorates of Greater Tunis. The group consists of 03 male social workers while the number of women is 07.

The research group also includes 10 girls in conflict with the law between 16 and 18 years laid off from the Girls' Correction Centre who were taken in charge by the centers of defense and social integration.

4. Search results

4.1. Assessing the Assisting Relationship from the Perspective of the Girl in Conflict with the Law

The interviews with the girls showed a difference in the level of satisfaction with the human and professional relationship from one girl to another depending on the gender of the worker. We noted a tendency to express the desirability of the nature of this relationship when the stakeholder is a man. Indeed, the latter offers an atmosphere of comfort of attention and empathy. The girls represent him in hope, sanctuary and refuge.

The statements of most girls show that their supportive relationship with the social worker, which is characterized by trust, closeness, empathy and justification for delinquency, generated a state of dependence on him and a complementary behaviour that is reflected in the absolute confidence in his efforts to help them adapt through family, school or economic integration. This confirms the validity of our hypothesis that the social worker represents the delinquent girl as a victim, which increases her dependency.

The girl's independence is the product of her interaction with the social worker through the process of verbal and non-verbal communication and the symbols used in the helping relationship.

On the other hand, most girls in conflict with the law have expressed fear and anxiety in communicating with social workers and fear treating them because their images are linked to the cruelty, rigour and firmness resulting from communication models.

The use of social expressions of stubbornness and careless immaturity indicates that a girl is denigrated by a social worker, which reduces her responsiveness to her, reduces her interaction during the course of the business, and threatens to break communication.

These negative representations and images show behavioral attitudes that reflect rejection, stigmatization and blocking of entry points for any attempt to open and

interaction, which exacerbates problems and barriers to communication with the offending girl.

In conclusion, we consider that the low reactivity of the girl in conflict with the law during the management is a reaction to the social worker she represents as guilty, which confirms the validity of our pre-established research hypothesis.

4.2. Assessing the Role of Social Workers in Reconciliation with the Family

It was found that most girls appreciated social intervention at this level and confirmed that there has been a change in the nature of relationships within the family model that appears in the daughter's communication with her parents. There is a clear transition from an authoritarian model of communication based on father control to a different model in which girls are allowed to express their views and needs; from a multi-litigation family to a combination of good interactive relationships.

Reconciliation with family for another group of girls has preserved the family bond by accepting the girl and reversing some of the parental attitudes of breaking the parental relationship with the girl.

Through these rhetorical contents, we can conclude the appreciation of these girls for the professional efforts of social workers and in recognition of the positive impact of the intervention aimed at family reconciliation. This would help normalize the relationship with family members and provide the kind of emotional stability needed for girls to adapt and integrate socially.

However, the relational stability of girls in the family remains at risk, because reconciliation does not concern apparent communication problems without including deep relational disorders that may require mediation as a family treatment mechanism. Some of the girls interviewed raised several relationship issues with their families.

4.3. Level of Satisfaction with Onboarding Procedures

The interviews showed that the integration project is accompanied by a feeling of fear, anxiety and confusion due to their lack of vocational training opportunities and their lack of access to the financial privileges promised by social workers that will help them reintegrate into school or work.

As a result, there is a lack of visibility regarding the inclusion of most of the girls interviewed, with a state of fear and concern about the potential failure of the integration project, especially in the relatively long waiting situation and in the lack of promises that girls have received from social workers that have not been fulfilled.

In conclusion, the evaluation of social management by the girl in conflict with the law showed that social workers attach great importance to reconciliation between the girl and her family in order to ensure her emotional and family stability in view of her integration. The intervention also aimed at school reintegration or economic integration of the girl, while neglecting psychological support and life skills development.

Conclusion

We tried to analyze the aid relationship from the perspective of social workers and girls in conflict with the law and found two different trends in the nature of the human relationship with girls in conflict with the law according to gender. The results of the research are therefore identical to the first hypothesis we initially identified.

À In our opinion, it is necessary to determine how girls in conflict with the law assess social responsibility on the basis of their level of satisfaction with the relationship between support and services provided within the institution.

Thus, the second hypothesis of the research is rephrased as follows: Girls in conflict with the law consider that the services provided by social workers in the context of the management are circumstantial and only aimed at their reconciliation with the family.