

Research on the main characteristics and intervention pathways of the psychological state of juvenile delinquents

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Abstract

Juvenile delinquency has always been one of the issues that society attaches great importance to. Compared to adults, minors are in a critical stage of growth and development, so the reasons behind their illegal activities are more complex and diverse. By analyzing the psychological characteristics of juvenile delinquents, reasonable and feasible corrective strategies are proposed based on this, which is of great significance for preventing juvenile delinquency and rescuing minors who have fallen behind and returning to society. On the premise of discussing the necessity of valuing the mental health of juvenile delinquents, this article discusses the manifestations of their mental health in four aspects: cognitive characteristics, emotional characteristics, willpower characteristics, and personality characteristics. Based on this, it proposes psychological correction methods for juvenile delinquents in the discovery stage, trial stage, prison stage, and post release stage, aiming to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for the prevention and correction of juvenile delinquency.

Keywords

Juvenile delinquents; mentality; psychological feature; intervention pathway.

1. Introduction

At present, juvenile delinquency presents diversified and younger characteristics, which is a huge challenge for families, schools, and society. Adolescence is an important period of significant physical and mental changes for individuals. Mental and emotional control, as well as personality traits, are not yet stable and are highly susceptible to adverse environmental influences, leading to illegal behavior. The punishment given by traditional means mostly treats the symptoms rather than the root cause, and may even have a counterproductive effect. Therefore, conducting psychological understanding of juvenile delinquents, understanding their specific psychological conditions, and seeking solutions based on these psychological conditions have become consensus research topics in the fields of criminology, psychology, and education. Only by identifying the psychological factors behind the phenomenon of crime can we achieve the goals of reform, education, and rescue, and provide re socialization education for these juvenile delinquents.

2. The importance of paying attention to the psychological state of juvenile delinquents

2.1. Revealing the Deep Psychological Motivation behind Criminal Behavior

Juvenile delinquency is an outcome of interaction between inner and outer condition[1]. To attribute juvenile delinquency only on causes like family, peers etc., can not help in explaining that given set of circumstances how comes one person commits crime but another does not. Hence, it is especially necessary for us to analyse the subjective causes of juvenile delinquency. Take their inherent cognitive bias as an example which makes them misunderstand the law and

regulation or other's words and action. the lack of rational emotional regulation may lead to violent methods to solve contradictions and disputes, and the poor attitude towards life may generate criminal motivation for it. Through this kind of psychology factors analysis, we could better understand the criminal behavioral mechanism[2].

2.2. Improve the accuracy of juvenile crime prevention and correction

The growth background and psychological characteristics of every juvenile delinquent are different, and adopting a uniform education and correction method cannot achieve ideal results. Based on the analysis of psychological factors, juvenile delinquents are classified into different types of psychological delinquent groups, and more targeted corrective measures are implemented on this basis[3]. For example, for underage offenders with cognitive dissonance, correction can be made for cognitive biases; Emotional management training can also be strengthened for people with poor emotional control. In this way, it can improve the efficiency of correction and effectively prevent recidivism, making the most effective use of judicial resources and educational correction resources.

2.3. Promoting the return of juvenile delinquents to society and self reconstruction

Juvenile delinquents ultimately need to return to society, and whether they can successfully achieve their return depends on their level of mental health. Many juvenile delinquents may experience a series of negative emotions such as inferiority, helplessness, and exclusion after receiving judicial treatment. If they cannot be regulated in a timely manner, it can easily lead to self abandonment or even recidivism. Valuing their mental health status, reshaping their confidence, social relationships, and correct outlook on life through professional psychological counseling, and better helping them return to society, is the fundamental way to ensure their healthy development in the future. The effect of good psychological transformation is far superior to superficial social control[4].

3. Main characteristics of the psychological state of juvenile delinquents

3.1. Cognitive characteristics: Extreme, self-centered, and weak legal awareness

The cognitive bias of juvenile delinquents is mainly manifested in cognitive extremism. They tend to take two extremes when it comes to things, always looking at people and doing things in a negative light, believing that others are intentionally targeting them and setting obstacles for themselves everywhere. Cognitive extremism often leads to conflicts with others in their daily lives. In addition, self-righteousness is also a common cognitive characteristic among most juvenile delinquents. They often think about problems from a self-centered perspective and rarely consider the feelings of others and social norms. When their desires are not satisfied, they may feel resentful and engage in extreme behavior[5].

In addition, there is often a lack of legal awareness among juvenile offenders, and they do not have sufficient understanding of the authority and sanctity of the law. They believe that the law does not punish the public and that juvenile offenders will not be punished. These deficiencies have brought great convenience to them in carrying out illegal and criminal activities.

3.2. Emotional Characteristics: Impulsiveness, Anxiety, Depression, and Emotional Indifference

In addition, in terms of emotional characteristics, juvenile delinquents exhibit more impulsivity, with fast and intense emotional activation, and lack of effective regulation of their own emotions. After being stimulated, they do not have time to consider the consequences and directly take action. Many passionate crimes are caused by emotional impulses; In addition,

anxiety and depression are also common among juvenile delinquents. When they encounter setbacks in their studies, tense family relationships, or even campus bullying, their inner distress and worries cannot be resolved, and the accumulated emotions can easily lead to the collapse of their spiritual world[6].

It is worth noting that some juvenile delinquents, especially repeat offenders, have a weak emotional tendency, lack empathy for others, and do not care about what they do. They do not feel that they have done wrong and do not feel guilty when hurting others, making it relatively difficult to correct.

3.3. Willpower Characteristics: Weak self-control, susceptibility to suggestion, and stubborn behavior

The willpower of juvenile offenders is often lacking. Poor self-discipline is the most common willpower trait of juvenile delinquents, who cannot resist external temptations, cannot restrain their momentary impulses, and know that doing certain things can cause serious consequences, but they just cannot control themselves. Poor self-discipline is partly due to the immature development of their prefrontal cortex, and partly due to the lack of proper rule education provided by their families during their young years. In addition, juvenile offenders are easily influenced by hints and misled by friends, and are prone to going with the flow and losing themselves without their own correct judgment, leading to criminal behavior. However, in some cases, they also exhibit stubborn behavior. Once they form incorrect beliefs or choose the wrong path, it is difficult to change them through simple preaching. This stubbornness and extremist cognition reinforce each other, increasing the difficulty of educational correction.

3.4. Personality traits: distorted values, aggression, and antisocial tendencies

Secondly, in terms of personality, juvenile delinquents have distorted values. For example, they believe that violence is an effective way to solve everything, obtaining benefits through illegal means is a smart move, daring to break the law and commit crimes is a sign of courage and ability, and so on. This kind of value reversal of right and wrong is also an important basis for their continuous criminal activities[7]. Juvenile delinquents generally exhibit aggressive personality traits, dealing with frustration in an aggressive manner, showing a tendency towards irritability and aggression, and having tense interpersonal relationships. Some juvenile delinquents with serious circumstances have shown obvious antisocial personality tendencies. They ignore social norms, lack a sense of responsibility, do not repent, and blame others or society for their illegal activities. Once this personality trait is formed, it is quite difficult to correct and requires long-term systematic psychological intervention.

4. The main paths of psychological intervention for juvenile delinquents

4.1. Construction of Early Identification and Risk Assessment System

The psychological correction of juvenile delinquents should be advanced, and a scientific psychological warning mechanism should be formed in schools, because juvenile delinquency is not something that can be achieved overnight, but has a gradually worsening period. If attention can be paid to deviations and effective correction can be carried out, many adverse consequences can be stifled in the cradle[8]. Schools, streets, and judicial offices can regularly conduct mental health assessments for students. Adopting psychological measurement, behavioral observation, visits and other forms to detect minors with high criminal risks early. Standardized scales can be used for psychological measurement to assess the emotional state, behavioral performance, socialization level, and other aspects of minors;

Behavioral observation refers to teachers and community workers paying attention to whether the student frequently violates discipline, whether their relationships with classmates are tense, and whether their emotions fluctuate greatly; Home visits to understand the family

environment and parent-child relationship. The screening mainly focuses on indicators such as poor family environment, academic failure, tense peer relationships, and abnormal emotional behavior, which are risk factors for juvenile delinquency. A file should be established among high-risk adolescents to dynamically observe their emotional fluctuations and make necessary adjustments to prevention work[9]. Early identification aims to detect and intervene early, providing corresponding psychological intervention and behavioral correction before the problem occurs, so that they can get out of the predicament as soon as possible and avoid truly entering the abyss of crime; In addition, the construction of a risk assessment mechanism is also beneficial for judicial organs to correctly assess the social and recidivism risks of juvenile offenders in case handling. Thirdly, it provides reference for the next step of handling and makes judicial decisions more targeted.

4.2. Psychological counseling and crisis intervention in the judicial process

After teenagers enter the judicial process, psychological intervention should be carried out accordingly. At this time, psychological intervention has its own particularity, namely crisis intervention. Teenagers who enter the judicial process for the first time may be in a state of tension, fear, or resistance. They may be afraid of punishment and dare not speak the truth, or they may not cooperate because they do not trust the judicial department. At this stage, public security, procuratorial, and judicial organs should be equipped with full-time judicial social workers or psychological counselors to provide timely psychological intervention to minors involved in criminal cases. Psychological intervention should first help minors calm their emotions, face their own behavior, truthfully confess the situation of the case, and assist in later investigation and disposal work; After entering the trial stage, the results of psychological assessment can be used as an important reference for sentencing and disposal; Non custodial measures such as conditional non prosecution and probation may be applied to minors with severe psychological abnormalities. To provide the possibility for them to receive social correction and psychological treatment, and to avoid cross infection and psychological harm caused by their brief detention. Psychological correction during the trial stage is a work process with obvious crisis intervention characteristics. In this process, special attention should be paid to minors who have self harm, self harm, or a tendency to retaliate against society. Timely capture their psychological crisis information and make corresponding behavioral arrangements to eliminate hidden dangers and protect their personal safety; While completing the current task of psychological correction, it is also necessary to consider the smooth progress of later correction and social work, so as to make minors believe in justice and reshape their courage to start anew.

4.3. Systematic psychotherapy within correctional institutions

For juvenile offenders who need to be sent to correctional institutions to serve their sentences, scientific psychological correction should be the main content of educational correction[10]. The traditional preaching and admonishing management only stays at the level of behavior regulation, and cannot truly touch the spiritual world of juvenile offenders, making it difficult to change their cognitive biases and behavior from the source. It needs scientific psychological rectification, the penetration of psychological rectification into educational rectification. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is which is currently a popular and effective treatment modality. Its goal is for the adolescent to identify his/her erroneous ideas, change these ideas, and establish the right coping behavior step by step to change their extreme thoughts and inappropriate behavior. For example, often mistaking others' unconscious actions for malicious ones, and gradually changing this attribution style through learning to reduce conflicts in interpersonal relationships. It is also necessary to provide necessary family therapy for juvenile delinquents with severely disharmonious family relationships. Due to the fact that many juvenile delinquents' problems stem from their families, it is possible to help them rebuild their

family support system and create conditions for their future return to their families by repairing parent-child relationships and family communication patterns;

Group psychotherapy could also serve as means for receiving peer's help and feedback and learning of interpersonal skills that would improve their ability to adapt to social environment. In a group, they'll see changes in others, receive role models, and be able to improve their self-worth by helping others. Psychological correction should be integrated throughout the entire process of correction work, and corrective measures should be continuously updated with the progress of the correction object, making them coherent and systematic. At the same time, corrective units should be equipped with sufficient professional orthodontists, develop corresponding assessment and corrective procedures, and make psychological correction an important component of educational correction.

4.4. Psychological support and community integration assistance during the stage of returning to society

Juvenile delinquents in the end must go back into society, and it's especially important to give them some psychological intervention before they step out of the correctional facility. Most teens that have just been released from correctional facilities are brimming with hopes for their new lives, but quickly face numerous real-life challenges like social discrimination, trouble getting into school or a job, and the recruitment of old bad friends, they will have psychological ups and downs and even give up on themselves. So, a transition mental health care programme whereby social workers or psychologists are provided with some sort of follow up assistance during this time of coming back. Such monitoring would consist in periodic personal meetings, telephone follow-up, home visit, etc., in order to promptly understand the psychological state and living condition of returned teenagers; and give the corresponding help and guidance in case of any difficulty encountered. Communities need to have a good attitude, giving return migrant youths a tolerant and acceptable space, without labelling or excluding them. Volunteers may help the returned teens on a one-to-one basis. Mature volunteers might maintain ongoing relationships with them, solve their own difficulties as much as they can; and give them psychological counselling and life advice.

Education and employment are important guarantees for returning to society. Through vocational skills training, education assistance projects, and other means, we can improve their self-reliance and rebuild their confidence in life. Having one skill and a stable source of income can greatly enhance the self-efficacy of returning teenagers and reduce the probability of them repeating the same mistakes to solve survival pressures. In addition, it is necessary to guide returning teenagers to build positive social relationships, encourage them to participate in some positive community activities, and gradually break away from the shadow of the past. Encourage them to participate in interest classes, volunteer services, etc., and find a sense of presence and achievement in good interpersonal relationships. Psychological intervention during the regression stage is not a short-term behavior, but should provide long-term support based on individual adaptation until they truly integrate into society. Only by doing a good job in psychological support during the return stage can we consolidate the transformation achievements within correctional institutions and truly achieve the goal of helping juvenile delinquents return to the right path.

5. Conclusion

The psychological characteristics of minor suspect are: extreme individualism in cognition, irritability and insensibility in emotion, lack of self-control and willpower in will, deviation of moral concepts and aggressiveness in personality, which constitute the internalized

psychological root of minor suspect 'criminal activities. The correction of minor suspect should not only stay at the level of behavior correction and behavior control. Therefore, only when it goes deep into the psychological level, and starts to intervene in cognitive reconstruction, emotional regulation, personality improvement and other aspects, can it really cure both symptoms and root causes. From early detection to legal regulation, from centralized correction in correctional facilities to post care assistance, establishing a full cycle psychological intervention model is an inevitable way to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency and guide delinquent youth back to the right path. In the future, further interdisciplinary research collaboration is needed to explore the psychological processes of juvenile delinquents, improve assistance measures, and contribute to the growth and development of young people.

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