

# CAUSES OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF ADOLESCENTS

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## Abstract

*Problems of antisocial behavior today are not only consequence of bad material conditions, nowadays they ensue more and more from contradictories of rich society that gave to everyone proportionally high standards in the area of work and behavior, but not in consumption field. This state brings us to the conclusion that today we live in structurally dissatisfied society, that is a base of many antisocial behavior problems. To prevent successfully antisocial behavior, it is necessary to research a wide field of disorders in social behavior of adolescents, from their most common forms, causes, to the consequences which this kind of behavior has on an individual and its social environment. The causes of escalated juvenile delinquency are found even in the school system, economic instability, bad influence of peers and also in neglect or excessive care of parents. In this paper, the author is focused on the most dominant causes of social behavior disorders. Target group are adolescents in high school, just because in this life period young people tend to absorb different forms of socially unacceptable behavior depending on the sex of adolescent. The paper gives a few topics for new researches.*

**Key words:** *adolescence, antisocial aggressive behavior, delinquency, deviant subculture and counterculture, dissocial behavior.*

## Introduction

Educational institutions like school „are just one part of growing process whose importance and influence we must not underrate; organized education and learning are only side effects of authentic social life because we also learn by living as socially active beings, in our own environment“ (Knezevic-Floric, 2006, 333). Without looking into results of education and perception of previous experiences and challenges that exist in social environment, educational institutions can not plan, organize and decide about their work. In fact, we can say that „educational institutions can not work functionally anymore, just oriented to themselves; today, they actually have to form some kind of pedagogical platform where they will perceive and understand social mechanics of all factors of educational process“(Ibidem, 333). We can say that pedagogically perceived levels of education, starting from early childhood, don't represent anymore „the only field that prepare young people for life, but they are also fields of social area that follow and mark life of every single young man“(Ibidem, 334). For that reason educational institutions in their work have to structure already lived experience of students, giving them an opportunity for interpretation of this experience. By superficial observation, problems of social pedagogy, seem apparently individual, but actually most of individual cases indicates on social surroundings that can significantly and continuously endanger a process of growing up. Based on that „we should consider problems that pluralistic socialization brings with it, and which demands from every individual the high level of responsibility, bad relations in family, excessive school demands, but also influence of media, peers...“ (Giasecke, 1993, 115). Appearance of antisocial behavior, and public reaction on it, are socially caused, just like the way of dealing with antisocial youth.

In modern concept of social pedagogy a motive for social discipline disappears, while a motive of **prevention** grows stronger.

The prevention of antisocial behavior implies „studying of principles that can cause its deterioration or disappearance“ (Janković, 1984, 54). Prevention, like diagnosis and therapy, represents besides studying of general principles, studying of some methodological and practical procedures of their implementation as well. Beside that, prevention in general has to be directed multidimensionally, i.e. in sense of working on causes, development conditions, diffusion and on the therapy of young people with disorders in social behavior.

**Adolescence** as one of the most important life period is critical age of young people's development. In this period of life a person is expected to mature into a health person and to take its place in society as its useful member. Young person in this age should accept social rules and norms of behavior which are imposed by society where lives. Adolescence put young person in front of a difficult life challenge. In this age a young individual wants to be respected as an adult, while it still behaves like a child. Youngsters' behavior is „ambiguous and confusing- adolescents rebuff influence and model offered by adults, they feel rejected by environment where they live and usually have false sense of power“ (Rubinsteil, Fedelman, 1993. 50). During this life period, young person goes through biological maturation, forms its attitudes and character qualities when also absorbs moral and ethic values, achieves emotional separation from parents, builds its attitude towards peers, learns socially- responsible behavior and is prepared to be economically independent (Ibidem, 75).

During acquisition, development and learning of these rules and norms of behavior, adolescent often goes astray and lose its way of regular development. Young confused individuals, that get across new challenges, usually influenced by exterior factors and false sense of power, start to experiment with themselves and this way usually puts them in situation to accept forms of deviant behavior. During nineties until today, our country as a country in transition, experienced a series of breakdowns of moral, legal and social values, that put confused young person already in conflict with existing norms in front of new challenges. Young unformed person is apparently allowed to decide by itself what is right and what is not. In this confusing world of adults, adolescents, without the knowledge and/ or having support or model, often go astray absorbing different forms of antisocial behavior“ (Ibidem, 75).

*Social happenings in countries in transition and etnocultural specifics of our country* have brought about particular trends as in adolescence and adictology to us. Adolescents on the one hand „become mature earlier in physical and intellectual sense, but on the other hand, it is evident that they become emotionally mature later and more slowly, so we can say that this situation has brought to some new characteristical marks in the area of adolescents antisocial behavior“ (Ibidem, 76).

To determine more completely the idea of social behavior disorders and delinquency, it is necessary to define the concept of deviant behavior. Deviant behavior in essence is „nonconformist behavior which concerning some values is in conflict with certain social standards. Which is deviant in one environment, in some cases doesn't have to be in another,“ (Đorđević, 1998, 33).

Depending on form, deviancy can be positively sanctioned (reward), sanctioned in a negative way (punishment; gentle or hard) or just accepted without reward or punishment.

We choose a term- disorder in social behavior, because it seems to be the most adequate for needs of social pedagogy. Beside that, a reason more to choose this term, is a fact that we can find it more often in relevant specialized disciplines and institutions that more carefully treat complex problematics of children with antisocial behavior.

Cumulative work of factors from life domain, through individual, causes appearance, development and maintenance of antisocial behavior. When one form of antisocial behavior appears, later it can affect development of other forms (e.g. delinquency can bring to abuse

of drugs and vice versa). This „model of acting that implies multiple reciprocal influence of factors (between individual and different ways of antisocial behavior, between same forms of antisocial behavior) today in the area of preventative practice is called Model of influence network“ (Popovic-Citic and Popovic, 2009, 47). The model doesn't have a description of same factors, but it is used just as conceptual framework for classification of the factors according to life domains. Like this it has a large implementation in all trials of classification of risky and protective factors (Ibidem, 47).

### **Parents as Cause of Disorders in Social Behavior**

It is desirable to know that relations in family have different influences on children depending on how they are seen from child's perspective. In fact the „view of parents' actions towards child reflects on the child's view of itself, which influence recurrently later interpretation of their procedures“ (Knezevic-Florice, 2007, 91).

The root of disorders is in a relation parent- child. Irresponsibility of parents, deficiency of love (which is most important in the first several years of life) “brings to the fact that children react with aggression on family, and later also on society“ (Ibidem, 130).

According to Gibnes, these children have the following types of parents:

1. Parents actively reject children, and in that way create antisocial and aggressive persons inclined to fights and even to brutal crackdowns.
2. Parents are uninterested, not involved, most often guests in a house. They try to compensate shortfall of emotional investments with money, valuable and even unnecessary gifts.
3. Parents that are „inflexible, rigid in their attitudes“ form inhibited children which are introvert, shy, apathetic and lukewarm“ (Bukelic, 2004, 304).

In these types of parents there are two types of antisocial behavior, and they are:

1. Primary disorders in social behavior with defiance, egocentrism and cruelty, appear because of defective super-ego. In this case stands out abnormal aggression, undeveloped sense of guilt and narcissistic self-valuation as important characteristics of this type of disturbed behaviour. Treatment of these persons is very difficult (and usually unsuccessful) because of a bad emotional transfer in psychotherapeutic process (Ibidem, 304–305).
2. In the second type, in family education dominates austerity and repression. This is most often a neurotic type of disturbed behavior when social manifestations appear as some kind of enforce, and they are followed by sense of guilty and remorse. Their discharge of tension doesn't work on a principle of sublimation but on a principle of abreaction. These delinquents „break rules in the same way, and because of that they are quickly discovered, which is interpreted as fulfillment of their need for punishment“ (Ibidem, 305).

According to Jovan Bukelic, these delinquents have developed sense of injustice, “they often identify themselves with socially negative groups, they form gangs, they do everything to be loved“ (Ibidem, 305), and the repression wakes in them new aggression.

### **School and Peers as Cause of Disorders in Social Behaviour**

School represents specific surroundings where students make relationships essentially different from those with family members which contributes to development and maturation of personality and also enrich their experience. School nevertheless fulfils educational function, has also an influence on the process of socialization of students where interaction with peers is very important. The characteristics of school influence on mutual relations of students and

accomplishment of socializing role of peers, as well as an attitude towards school and learning depends on quality of interaction with peers (Joksimovic, 2004, 37).

In modern social pedagogical science they pay big attention to causes of disorders in social behaviour. Concerning the school, as risky factors we can name the following:

1. Scarce resource and poverty of school (Sobot and collaborators, 2010, 58).
2. Situation factors (big schools, large number of students in classes, urban place where the school is situated).
3. Injurious teachers that don't respect students and beside that don't encourage collaboration between students, but competition.
4. Methods of work in class and leadership determinate authority, where does not exist collaborating atmosphere, encouragement of students to be active and tolerant with different opinions and ideas (Joksimovic, 2004, 55–56).

In peers' groups we can recognize next factors as risky ones:

1. Influence of antisocial peers.
2. Rejecting by peers and unpopularity of individuals. (Sobot and collaborators, 2010: 58) Results of longitudinal research, done by Kupersmidt and Coie, started with sample of students in the fifth grade of primary school, that have been followed in next seven years (till the end of high school), show that status between peers in preadolescent period influences on school maladjustment and delinquent behaviour in adolescence. The children participated in this research at the beginning had status of rejected ones, later in school functioning (fail exams, absence, expelling or abandonment of school). Rejecting by peers can cause different disorders whose nature depends on child's life history, temperament and its way of reacting on a stress (Joksimovic, 2004, 58).
3. Influence of juvenile gangs (Sobot and collaborators, 2010, 58).

Most of risky factors appear at the same time and in larger number, they are interlaced between them and increase the effect of each other. Probability to become chronic delinquent, increases with increment of number of risky factors, no matter which particular factors of risk are in case.

### **Economic Factors as Cause of Social Behavior Disorders**

A great number of authors has researched the connection between juvenile delinquency and low economic possibilities (poverty), emphasizing: class position of juvenile's family, which brings to status frustration, and/or creation of subculture, unequal distribution of social goods, and in poverty intermediated stigma (Ljubicic, 2006, 593). Viljem Bogner this delinquent behavior "interprets with nature of relation in capitalistic society, which, based on distribution, encourages egocentrism of a person" (Ljubicic, 2006, 593). Frederik Traser in explanation of juvenile delinquency starts with idea of subculture. Namely, unable to fulfill their needs in socially accepted way, because they have certain social position, they turn to their deviant microenvironment. In that way deviant behavior represents normal way of adjustment on conditions of social disorganisation (According to Ibidem, 593). Show and McKay have noticed, connecting a theory of structure and a theory of subculture, that societies with the greatest level of delinquency are those where distribution of economic, cultural and social values is most unfavorable (According to Ibidem, 598).

The connection between poverty and juvenile delinquency intrigues even today a large number of researchers. Jarjoura and collaborators have shown that economic deprivation of family which appears (or continues from before) until child is 5 years old, is significant predictive factor in formation of delinquent behavior in adolescence. Children growing up in poverty have lower academic success, show lower self-confidence, when parents look on them in inappropriate way, because they usually don't have good skills (According to Ibidem, 594).

Therefore, we can conclude that low economic power correlates positively with inclination to social behavior disorders.

It is necessary to define precisely the idea of delinquent behavior, that is different from juvenile originality, unconformistic behavior and confronting formation of so-called modal type of a person. In “multiplicity of values it is difficult for an adolescent to find its conscious and system of values, to anticipate the future, so it can come into moral crisis and protest behavior“ (Ibidem, 132).

In effect, we can say that “an adolescent can oppose to a dominate culture, to assimilate attitudes of deviant groups, to search for group identity, run away from deviant social ambiances, that can give him an illusion of identity and liberty“ (Ibidem, 132). So that a negative energy of everyday life can move a positive approach to life, it is necessary to gather all the society and in this circumstances work on getting balance and patience in mutual relations. All this should be followed by more compatibility of words and actions because there is no solution for the problem of children’s aggression without solving a number of questions of life quality of people in society.

### **Methodology of Research**

Particular hypothesis:

1. It is supposed that students of both sexes, consider a parents’ factor as dominant cause for social behavior disorders of adolescents in high-school institutions – parents who reject children actively and parents who are “inflexible and rigid in their attitudes, have a big influence on formation of disorders in social behavior.
2. It is supposed that for students of both sexes, the relation between peers is dominate factor for social behavior disorders of adolescents in high-school institutions – it is particularly strong the influence of antisocial peers and juvenile gangs, while rejection by peers and unpopularity of individuals is a little bit weaker determinant.
3. It is supposed that the economic factor is not the most dominant cause of social behavior disorders of adolescents in high-school institutions. Meanwhile, we consider that weak economic situation (poverty), according to adolescents, is one of most important determinants for development of social behavior disorders.

#### *Techniques and Instruments Used in the Research*

Considering the nature of the problem and the choice of adequate method, in research is used a technique of scaling (evaluation) by which we want to establish students’ ideas about the most dominant causes for social behavior disorders of adolescents in high-school institutions. As research instrument we will use the scale of Likert’s type, in which the examinees will express a level of consent and disagreement with proposed claims (judgments, statements), in accordance with given instructions in usual five-leveled scale. The scale has 14 claims.

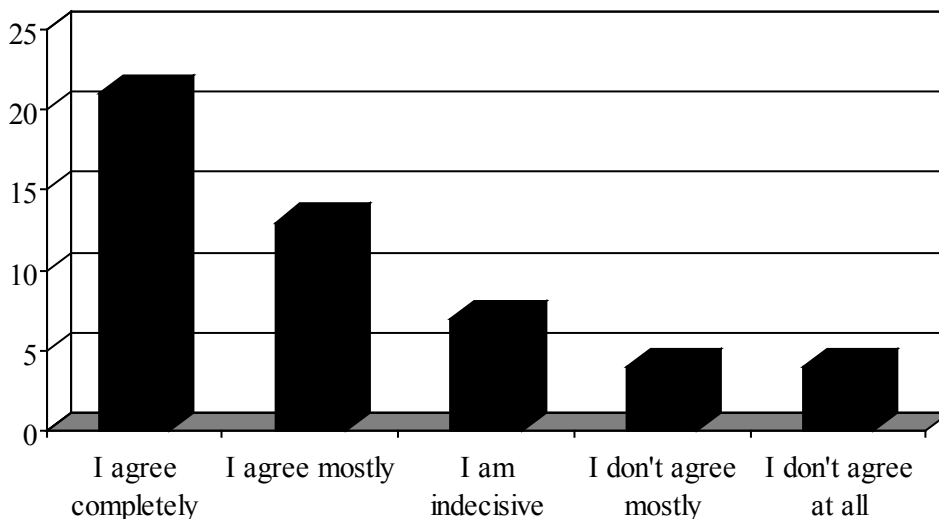
#### *Sample of Research*

The sample of examination is 105 students in high school on territory of Serbia, with 42 male and 63 female examinees. The most adequate method for the research realization was description with analysis of content as research technique and Analysis of Factors as multivariate method.

## Results of Research

To understand properly the appearance of social behavior disorders of adolescents, it was necessary to give an insight in how adolescents notice and see the factors of these disorders development. The point of view of causes in social behavior disorders, from prospective of adults and adolescents, is significantly different. Parents usually give too big or too small importance to the causes, of course, it doesn't mean that adolescents don't make the same mistake, but it is necessary to indicate the specificity of their attitudes. In effect, in this research we tried to determine which are attitudes of adolescents in this question, and also to determine if there are any differences in ideas considering the sex of adolescents.

The results given in this research have shown that adolescents of male sex consider that parents who reject children actively are the most dominant cause of social behavior disorders.



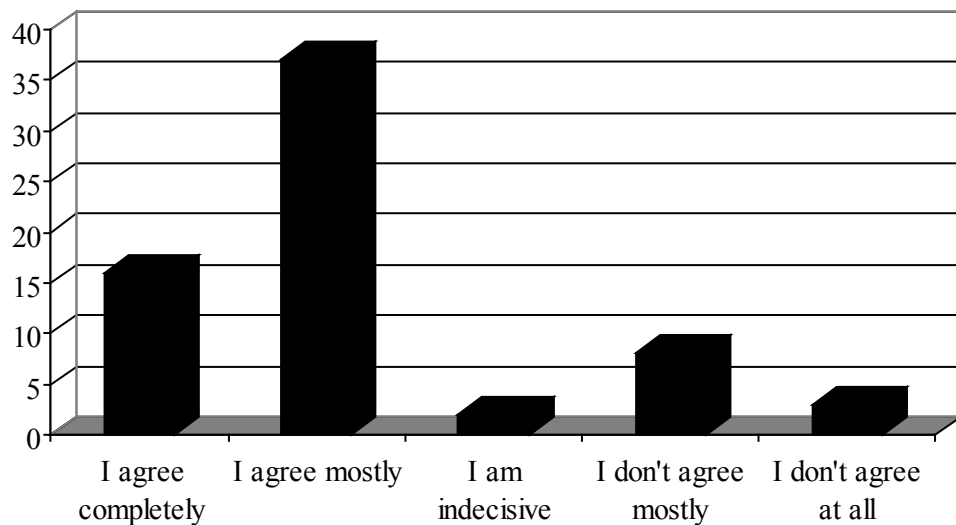
**Figure 1: The point of causes in social behavior disorders (male examinees).**

Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2 = 37,048$  is bigger than limited values (9.488 and 13.277) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01, we can conclude that distribution of the answers on this claim in the scale, is significantly different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Because the difference between given answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis, according to which the male students consider that parents who reject their children actively have a strong influence in formation of social behavior disorders, is confirmed.

Also, according to the research, even female adolescents consider the same factor as the most dominant cause of named disorders. This result is in balance with general hypothesis.

Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2 = 70,254$  is bigger than limited values (9.488 and 13.277) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01, we can conclude that distribution of the answers on this claim in the scale, is significantly different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Because the difference between given answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis that parents who actively reject their children have statistically dominant influence in formation of social behavior disorders, is confirmed.

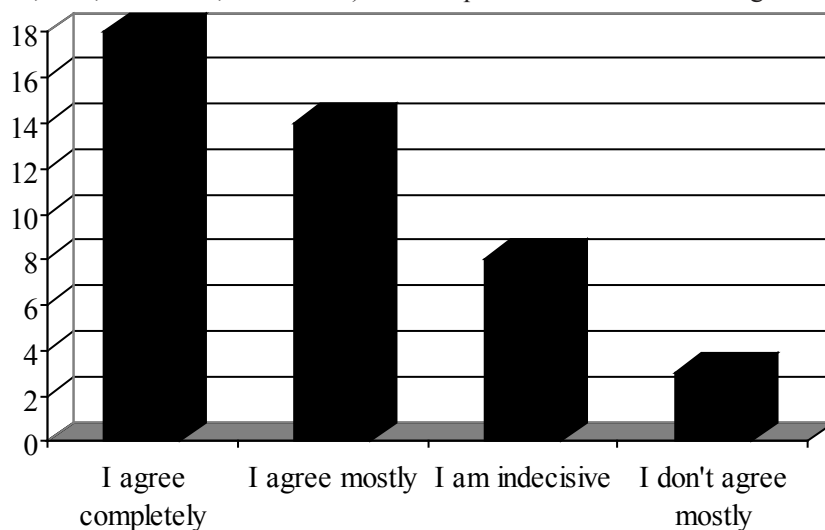




**Figure 2: The point of causes in social behavior disorders (female examinees).**

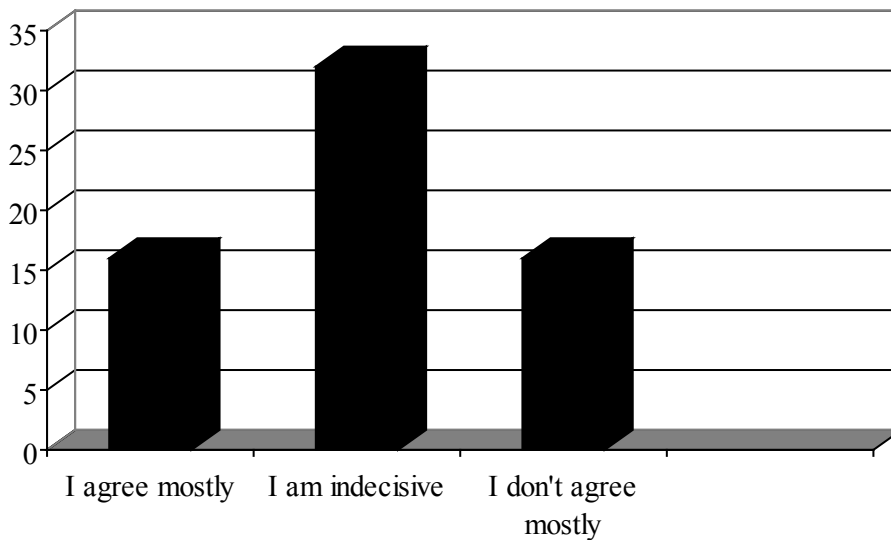
Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2=70,254$  is bigger than limited values (9.488 and 13.277) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01, we can conclude that distribution of the answers on this claim in the scale, is significantly different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Because the difference between given answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis that parents who actively reject their children have statistically dominant influence in formation of social behavior disorders, is confirmed.

The next dominant factor, with male adolescents is concerning identification of adolescents with peers, which is also in accord with general hypothesis. However, although all previous elements were in accordance with the general hypothesis of the research, it is not completely confirmed, because with analysis of answers of female adolescents, it was not confirmed that identification with peers was the dominant factor in social behavior disorders. For them, in dominance, stand out the following factors: identification of high school students with negative heroes (e.g. criminals, addicts of psychoactive substances...), influence of mass media (print, film, television, internet ...) and unequal distribution of social goods.



**Figure 3: Factor of identification of adolescents with peers (male examinees).**

Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2=16,095$  is bigger than limited values (7.815 and 11.341) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01, we can conclude that distribution of the answers on this claim in the scale, is significantly different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Because the difference between given answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis that the identification of high school students with peers who show antisocial behavior is a dominant factor of social behavior disorders, is confirmed.



**Figure 4: Factor of identification of adolescents with peers (female examinees).**

Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2=7,143$  is less than limited values (7.815 and 11.341) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01 we come to conclusion that distribution of answers on this claim in the scale, is not very different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Since the difference between answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis that identification of high school students with peers who manifest antisocial behavior is dominant factor of social behavior disorders, is not confirmed.

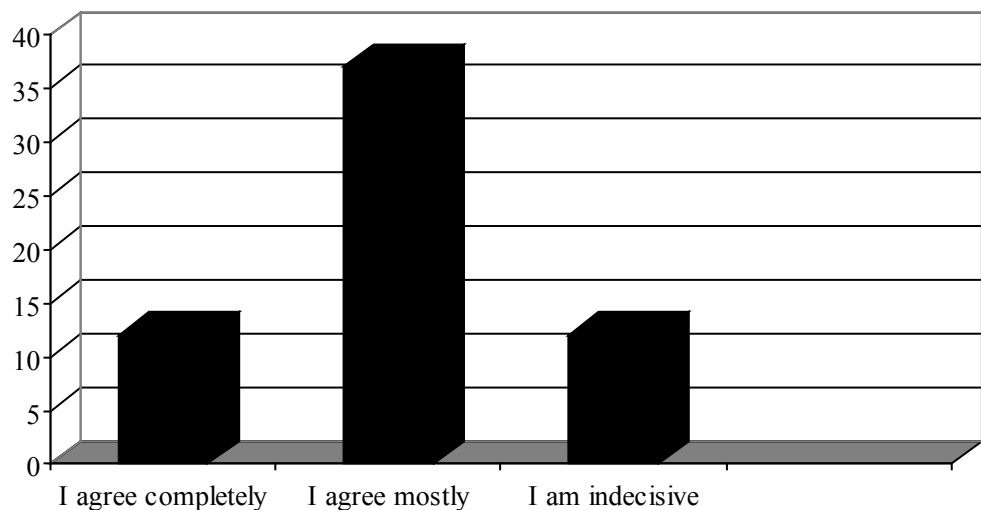
As next one, in dominance, cause of social behavior disorders, adolescents of both sexes name uncommitted and uninterested parents for their children. The result is in balance with the first hypothesis where is highlighted the less influence of this than the factor of parents who reject their children actively. However, while male adolescents do not consider the factor of parents who are rigid and too authoritarian in their attitudes as a dominant cause for social behavior disorders, female adolescents put this cause just behind the factor of uncommitted and uninterested parents, which is not in accordance with elements from the first hypothesis.





**Figure 5: Factor of uncommitted and uninterested parents for their children (male examinees).**

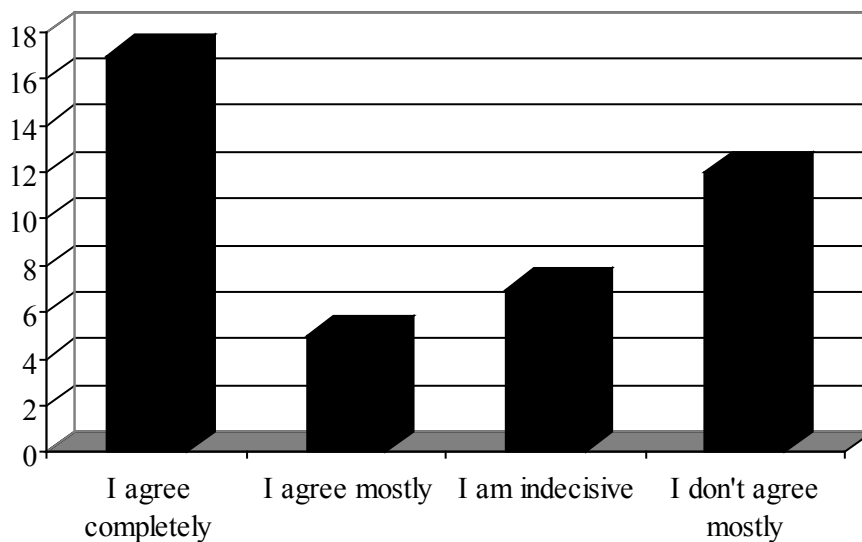
Considering that the calculated value  $\chi^2 = 5,810$  is less than limited values (7.815 and 11.341) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01 we can conclude that distribution of answers on this claim in the scale, is not very different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Since the difference between answers in this question is not statistically important, the hypothesis that parents who and inflexible are rigid in their attitudes have a dominant influence in formation of social behavior disorders, is not confirmed.



**Figure 6: Factor - uncommitted and uninterested parents for their children (female examinees).**

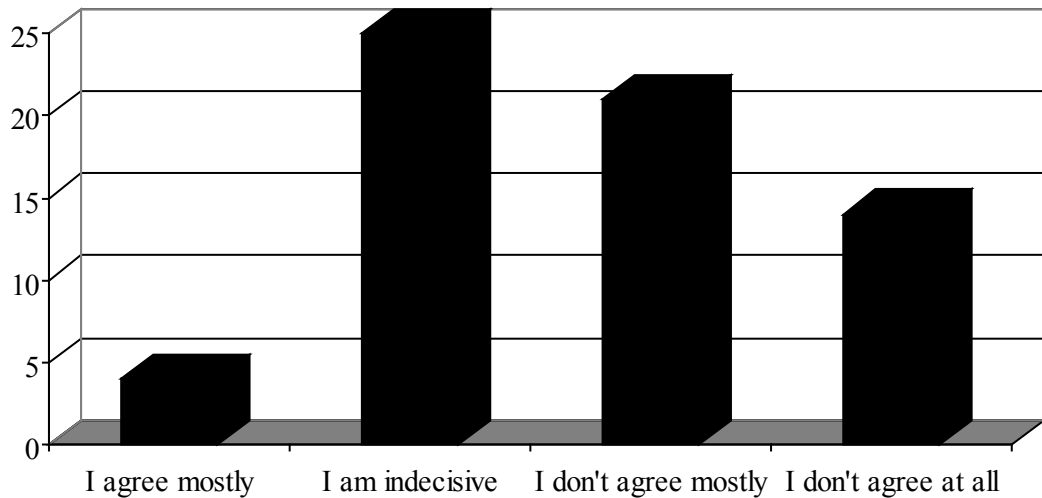
Considering that the calculated value  $\chi^2 = 20,667$  is bigger than limited values (7.815 and 11.341) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01 we can conclude that distribution of answers on this claim in the scale, is very different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Since the difference between answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis that parents who are rigid and inflexible in their attitudes have a dominant influence in formation of social behavior disorders, is confirmed.

Male adolescents, as next factor for social behavior disorders, underline the identification of high-school students with negative heroes (for ex. criminals, addicts from drugs...). Meanwhile, female adolescents, as next factor in dominance, underline factors regarding poverty of school and scarce resources and also the factor of economic poverty of adolescents. These results also are not in accordance with the fourth hypothesis which doesn't consider the factor of environment as a dominant cause in social behavior disorders.



**Figure 7: Factor - identification of high-school students with negative heroes (male examinees).**

Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2 = 7,143$  is less than limited values (9.488 and 13.277) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01 we come to conclusion that distribution of answers on this claim in the scale, is not very different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Since the difference between answers in this question is not statistically important, the hypothesis that poverty of school and scarce resources are not considered as dominant factors for social behavior disorders in high-school adolescents, is not confirmed.



**Figure 8: Factor - identification of high-school students with negative heroes (female examinees).**

Considering that calculated value  $\chi^2 = 19.222$  is bigger than limited values (9.488 and 13.277) on the level of importance 0.05 and 0.01 we come to conclusion that distribution of answers on this claim in the scale, is very different from distribution of equal probability of results frequency in some modalities. Since the difference between answers in this question is statistically important, the hypothesis that poverty of school and scarce resources are not considered as dominant factors for social behavior disorders in high-school adolescents, is confirmed.

### Conclusion

The first phase of antisociality manifests with social isolation of adolescent, which demonstrate in a symbolic way the disregard of social values, he doesn't care for the dialogue with others, but he does not behave dysfunctionally – with aggression on these social values and gain norms. In this period an adolescent is most usually inert, negative or mysterious, but just the fact that he resorts to the mechanism of rejection of constructive roles that were imposed on him by society, do not give us the right to declare immediately his behavior as deviant.

During the next phase the adolescents find themselves in the state of permanent conflict with positive social norms and values, they show specific affinity for groups (especially conflict ones), after that they come to structuration of antagonistic attitudes towards recognized values and authorities, pathologic behavior, organized actions in group whose behavior exemplar they assimilate uncritically.

As least dominant factors for social behavior disorders of male adolescents, are named the factors from which the first regard adolescents rejected by their peers or characterized as unpopular, and the other regard unequal distribution of social goods i.e. economic factor. As least dominant factor for female adolescents, is underlined the influence of big schools with too many students on development of disorders in social behavior (Card, Hodges, 2008, 459). However, with these adolescents was not confirmed the claim that individuals rejected by their peers (characterized as unpopular), represent the dominant factor for social behavior disorders. Beside that, with male adolescents are not confirmed the claims that the factors of big school

with large number of students, poverty of school and scarce resources (deficiency of informatic equipment, inadequate school gym...), are dominant factors for social behavior disorders. Also, they consider that the factor of economic poverty, adolescents families, do not belong to dominant factors. Beside that it is demonstrated that adolescents of both sexes do not consider the identification of an individual with peers' groups ("juvenile gangs") as dominant factor in social behavior disorders.

In high school level, family and pedagogic institution deal with population of students that are coming through dramatic psychical and cognitive changes. Named changes at the beginning of adolescence, among the rest, influence the ideas of adolescents and their feelings about themselves and their relationships with others, including parents. Considering family life, researches show that a period of adolescence in life is characterized by transformation and reorganization in family relations (Brilhart, Galanes and Adams, 2001. 305). The early ages of adolescence (include period from 10 to 15 years), are connected with appearance and escalation of conflicts between young adolescents and their parents (Laursen, Coy and Collins, 1998).

The research of a conflict parent-adolescent, during transitional years of early adolescence, has identified a few important characteristics of this negative electrified interactions. Primarily, it is important to know that resolving of conflicts in relations parent-adolescent, is necessary for engagement of important development functions. Engagement in reciprocal change, that includes divergent and opposite views, gives to adolescent an opportunity to improve interpersonal skills of negotiation, logical, abstract and critical opinion, and analyzing of alternative and/or opposite context for psycho-social development, and particularly, development of psychological autonomy and identity.

Based on indicated it is clear that a period of adolescence, is actually a period of the greatest turbulences during the process of young person's formation. It stands out that conflicts between parents and adolescents are common appearance, more often of delicate intensity, and they become more cruel just if initial conflicts are not solved in adequate way. It is clear that parents and their relation with adolescents have here a main role, but that in critical situations, it is also necessary a help of some expert i.e. pedagogist.

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