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Determining Causes of Deviant Behavior in Students

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Abstract: *The deviant behavior of students is a cause of concern for our society. Media sources signal daily the omnipresence of this social problem that must be researched from several perspectives. The way the student behaves is a reflection of his inner self. The inner balance determines the outer balance in relationships with others, in approaching problems, in the way of life. It is very important to understand the reasons, the causes that condition deviant behavior. Most often it is formed during the formation of the personality, as a result of a defective education, educational deficiencies, lack of trust and respect between the educator and the educated. That is why in order to understand the causes that determine deviant behavior in students, it is necessary to analyze the internal structure of the person, to take into account his needs, his life experience, the attitude he has about himself and others, his beliefs. Students who do not accept themselves unconditionally often have a distorted view of themselves, thus ending up living an illusion and exhibiting deviant behavior. Success in overcoming this problem is conditioned by the way the individual thinks about himself and the world around him, his attitudes towards life in general, his self-image and unconditional self-acceptance of his own person because this is a first step towards change.*

Keywords: *deviant behavior; dysfunctional attitudes; unconditional self-acceptance; needs; adaptation; students.*

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1. Introduction

Deviant behavior is manifested by an inability to adapt to the rules of conduct in society and can have various general and specific causes, internal and external and the nature of these manifestations in children is different from that of behavioral deviance in adults.

Deviant behavior is generally a form of destructive behavior, in order to cause damage whose nature can be material, psychological, moral or combined. A positive sign of deviant behavior is the manifestation of giftedness. But if society does not provide a talented person with a favorable environment, then he develops nervous and mental disorders, a violation of physical development, a complex of the victim. Deviant behaviors create a continuous tension that triggers dramatic interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts and can lead to the onset of even serious illness.

Behavioral deviance is determined by several factors: cultural, social, medical, psychosocial, pedagogical, material, etc. (Blândul, 2012). To understand the causes that determine deviant behavior in students, it is necessary to analyze the internal structure of the individual, mental processes in consciousness and external factors, the influence of social environment that can condition such manifestations. The adoption of a behavior is the result of psychic processes that take place in terms of consciousness, so deviant behavior should not be examined as a simple reaction to external factors. Behavior is determined by needs - a state of insufficiency of something, which the person wants to remove; internal tension that motivates the activity and determines the character and orientation of the acts and actions. Children and adolescents often turn to street groups where they can find the support, understanding, support and recognition they need - needs that are not met in the family or at school. Then negative socialization intensifies maladaptation and school dropout, facilitating behavioral drift (Turliuc, 2007). Thus, the causes of deviant behavior are subjective for each and must be analyzed as a separate story and can be elucidated if we focus on the needs (especially unsatisfied) of the child.

2. Theoretical Background

Among the fundamental motives of human behavior, we mention the attitudes that are often its direct cause, and, consequently, a central element in the determining chain of human behavior. It is well known that attitudes are closely related to personal and social experience, which the individual accumulates during his life, in close correlation with other

phenomena of mental life (Mărineanu, 2003). Attitudes are formed in the communication process, as a result of individual learning and experience and interfere with the social environment. The content, hierarchy and dynamics of attitudes are determined by mutual influence between people mediated by the act of communication.

Attitudes determine the direction of human behavior, give it meaning. That is why the deep and multilateral knowledge of the phenomenon of attitudes unleashes vast possibilities to understand the human being and his conduct and is an important tool for elucidating the problems explored. Attitudes are an important regulatory value in relation to our own individual, interpersonal or group behavior. Attitudes illustrate what we think, the set of ideas and concepts in our minds that are formed by the social environment in which we live and that shape our personality in a latent way. There is a causal relationship between attitudes and behaviors and in order to feel in harmony with ourselves it is necessary to have a balance between cognition and behavior. Attitude is "an invariant on the basis of which the individual selectively orients himself, prefers himself, adapts by evolving" (Zlate, 2002). The behavior manifested is often congruent with one's own system of beliefs and attitudes. Otherwise, there are feelings of frustration, disappointment, internalization ... leading to more serious undesirable behavioral manifestations.

Attitudes influence our behavior through a process of deliberate decision-making, so we can deduce some relevant aspects:

• Our behavior is influenced by attitudes towards a certain behavior.

• Behavior is also influenced by our opinions about what others think we should do. Social pressures often make us behave contrary to our personal beliefs.

Research on the relationship between attitudes and behavior has generated important conclusions. They refer to the fact that when attitudes are strong, they have great force and influence the behavior of the individual. Starting from the strong impact of attitudes on human behavior, researchers have initiated various scientific studies that refer to behavioral deviations caused by the presence of dysfunctional attitudes and beliefs of the individual accompanied by a precarious attitude towards himself and others.

Unconditional acceptance is an important and well-defined philosophical, spiritual and psychological concept. and is explained by the attitude of recognition of dignity and personal value in its integrity. Unconditional acceptance is represented by self-esteem, a sense of self-worth, a positive self-image. This term was widely promoted by C. Rogers

who explains it as an attitude through which a person shows self-care, attention, respect, emotional warmth and joy of being. It is a profound recognition of the right to free, autonomous existence, and an appreciation of the person because he is as he is.

Among the many things we instinctively value is unconditional self-acceptance, which we gain by experiencing the positive acceptance that others give us especially during childhood. During the formation and development of personality, parents, teachers, friends, media, etc., give us feedback when we meet the rules, requirements, expectations. Positive assessment based on "certain conditions" was called by Rogers conditional positive acceptance. Out of the desire to obtain this acceptance, vital for everyone, people take over and manifest behaviors that are presented to them by society, and not by their own values and interests or by the tendency to update. Over time, this "conditioning" leads to positive self-conditioning. That is, the person will be accepted only if he meets some existing standards, imposed in society, which often contradicts the updating of his own potential. The paradox is that people are often unable to meet these standards because they are created without regard to the uniqueness of human nature and this has a negative impact on self-image and unconditional self-acceptance, respectively.

Unconditional self-acceptance is a characteristic of maturity that involves a great tolerance for frustration, the ability to cope with stress, problems that arise by choosing the most effective strategy for it: either avoiding or facing or resigning to the inevitable.

The founders of cognitive-behavioral therapy, Albert Ellis and Aron T. Beck, take from Rogerian theory the principle of unconditional acceptance of others and self, man's tendency to self-actualization (Mărineanu, 2013). Global assessment of self, self-interpretations based on absolutist and irrational beliefs, creates dysfunctional emotions, anxiety, depression and feelings of guilt, anger, shame that are manifested by maladaptive, deviant behavior.

Thus, a person who does not accept himself unconditionally, will not function fully and efficiently and will not have that state of harmony between himself and the surrounding reality. Because his needs are not met, such a person will exhibit deviant behavior always trying to achieve inner balance. Only by having a balanced self-image, a high level of confidence in oneself and others, the student can achieve a state of good physical and mental comfort, avoiding resorting to undesirable behavioral manifestations to feel free (Dryden & DiGiuseppe, 2003). Empirical data show that the

level of unconditional self-acceptance is a factor that protects the psyche against emotional distress when the person is faced with negative life events.

In conclusion, we can say that an important function of unconditional self-acceptance is the unconditional acceptance of others and involves certain functional attitudes and behaviors:

• Empathy and effective relationship with the other, support for personal development;

• Encouragement and objectivity in relation to one's own and others' qualities and potential;

• Lack of discrimination and judgment.

• Respect, congruence and sincerity towards oneself and others.

The formulated conclusions allowed us to conclude that the presence of dysfunctional attitudes and the lack of unconditional self-acceptance contribute to the formation / development of deviant behavior. The long-term consequences of the manifestation of dysfunctional attitudes and of experiencing the feeling of non-acceptance of one's own person have a negative impact on the whole personality structure and on the person's behavior.

3. Analysis of the correlation between dysfunctional attitudes and unconditional self-acceptance in students with deviant behavior

Experimental research has focused on determining the level of dysfunctional attitudes and unconditional unconditional acceptance of oneself in students with deviant behavior.

The experiment was performed on a group of students with deviant behavior that manifests itself through difficulties in school adaptation, low or very low school level, high school absenteeism.

The purpose of the experiment is to analyze the relationship between dysfunctional attitudes and unconditional self-acceptance in students with deviant behavior.

The hypotheses underlying the research are the following:

Hypothesis 1. Students with deviant behavior show a high level of dysfunctional attitudes and a low level of unconditional self-acceptance.

Hypothesis 2: There is a correlation between the level of dysfunctional attitudes and the level of unconditional self-acceptance in students with deviant behavior.

The following evaluation tools were applied to validate the hypotheses:

I. Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ) - designed to measure the level of unconditional self-acceptance. An increased level of

USAQ score reflecting increased unconditional self-acceptance. This questionnaire was designed in 2001 by Chamberlain and The Hague and is based on Albert Ellis' theory of unconditional acceptance.

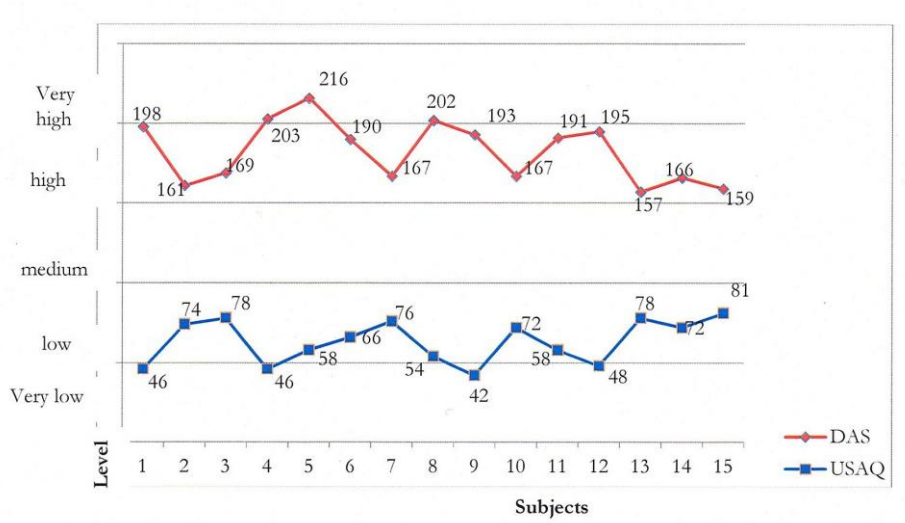
II. Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale (DAS-A) (Form A, Weissman, 1979, Weissman and Beck, 1978). The scale consists of 40 items, attitudes and beliefs that some people have in various situations formulated as statements that are analyzed and appreciated insofar as the person agrees with them.

The Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ) and the Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale (DAS) are administered in the pen-paper version and can be applied both individually and in groups.

Thus, the results of the USAQ questionnaire elucidated scores at a very low level of the unconditional acceptance obtained by the participants.

The answers, to the items of the DAS-A scale, provided us with information about the dysfunctional attitudes of students with deviant behavior, which function as schemes through which they construct their reality. For example, for items 7, 15, 27, 28, 31, 32, 34: I cannot be happy unless I am admired by most of the people I know; it is terrible to be disapproved by the people important to you; if you have no one to support you, you are condemned to sadness; if others find out how you really are, they will appreciate you less; I cannot trust others because they might treat me cruelly; you can't be happy if others don't like you; the majority of test subjects gave the answer 1=totally agree. It denotes a strong dependence on others, an inability to feel valuable and important without the approval of others, and implies a hostile attitude towards oneself and others. Likewise, the attitude of mistrust in people can be seen from the students' affirmative answers for items 3, 4, 8, 9: people will probably appreciate me less if I make a mistake; if I fail to do everything right every time, I will not be respected by others; asking for someone's help is a sign of weakness; if I don't do as well as others, it means I'm an inferior person. Thus, the answers given by the participants highlight the presence of a dysfunctional attitude towards their own qualities, dissatisfaction with themselves and a deficit of personal value.

The results show that the presence of dysfunctional attitudes is associated with other cognitive distortions (e.g., automatic negative thoughts, irrational beliefs), negative emotions and anxiety. Therefore, the results of the DAS and USAQ tests are presented in the following diagram (see figure 1).



(Source: Authors own contribution)
Figure 1. USAQ and DAS results obtained by students with deviant behavior

The scores obtained show a tendency of unconditional acceptance of one's own person, very low, - according to the literature - can be the trigger of certain forms of psychopathology in contact with negative life situations.

Analyzed in parallel, the results obtained, elucidate the fact that students with deviant behavior who show an unconditional acceptance of their own low and very low, tend to have a high and very high level of dysfunctional attitudes.

The results elucidated after the application of the tests were subjected to analysis by applying the pearson correlation test. The pearson correlation test was used to analyze the correlation between DAS and USAQ scale values in students with deviant behavior.

Table 1. Correlation between DAS and USAQ variables

		Very high level of dysfunctional behaviors	Unconditional acceptance of self very low
Very high level of dysfunctional attitudes	Pearson Correlation	1	-.850**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		15	15
Very low unconditional acceptance of oneself	Pearson Correlation	-.850**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		15	15

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: author's calculations based on statistical analysis (SPSS statistical analysis package, Pearson-type correlation)

Thus, there is a very strong correlation between the DAS and USAQ variables. If the value of one increases, the value of another decreases and vice versa. Or, if the value of the variable (indicator) very high level of dysfunctional attitudes increases by one unit (by one point), then the value of the variable (indicator) unconditional acceptance of one's own person very low decreases by about 0.9 points (-0.850) and vice versa.

Regarding the correlation between unconditional self-acceptance and dysfunctional attitudes, the hypothesis was confirmed, in the sense that a high level of dysfunctional attitudes is associated with a low level of unconditional self-acceptance.

4. Conclusions

The summary of the results presented in this chapter generates the following conclusions:

1. In accordance with the above, we emphasize that the hypotheses launched have been confirmed. Thus, students with deviant behavior involved in the experiment, show an unconditional acceptance of their own person low and very low, have a high and very high level of dysfunctional attitudes.

2. We also note that between the variables dysfunctional attitudes and unconditional acceptance of one's own person there is a very strong

correlation, a link of inversely proportional interdependence. Thus, if the value of one increases, the value of another decreases and vice versa.

Taking into account the results of the research, we propose the following recommendations regarding the prevention and reduction of deviant behavior in students:

- Extending the investigative approach to research areas, such as the criterion of age, ethnicity, socio-cultural, religion, etc.
- The development and implementation of programs that promote assertive communication, tolerance, democracy, a healthy way of life, values that constitute the premise of the formation of functional attitudes.
- Objective reflection in the mass media of the problems faced by students in school.

The formation and consolidation of personal, socially undesirable attitudes, which condition the emergence of destructive behaviors both for society and for the individual in particular, is one of the major problems faced by the young generation, therefore in search of solutions to prevent and reduce dysfunctional attitudes, I must applied personal development strategies for self-knowledge and unconditional acceptance of one's own person, the formation of positive affective communication skills with peers, the modeling of positive personality traits in order to form healthy visions and prosocial behavior.

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