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## Deviant Behavior of Young People in Educational Institutions: Criminological and Forensic Analysis

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### Abstract

The authors established and analyzed the most common forms of contemporary deviant behavior of young people in Russian educational institutions. The article describes the characteristics of the main forms of deviant behavior of young people, reveals their relationship and interdependence, provides information about individual elements that are important for the investigation, as well as for criminological and forensic prevention of violent crimes. In the course of the research, the authors conducted an anonymous questionnaire survey of two target groups - teachers and students of schools in the Kaliningrad region. Based on the analysis of the results of the questionnaire, the authors revealed a consistent trend of increasing incidents of physical and psychological violence in the educational environment over the past ten years. It was concluded that the most common forms of deviant behavior in educational institutions are illegal acts of physical violence, as well as manifestations of bullying and cyberbullying. At the same time, forms of deviant behavior are in interrelations, because bullying against a particular minor in a number of situations constantly develops into physical violence. The authors also identified the relevance of targeted training for teachers on the prevention of manifestation of modern forms of deviant behavior of young people in educational institutions: on the problems of combating terrorism and extremism in the youth environment, bullying and cyberbullying. The analysis of the results of the questionnaire also made it possible to identify certain blocks of typical information that may have a forensic value and be used for the purposes of solving and investigating crimes committed by minors.

*Keywords:* deviant behavior of young people, violence in educational institutions, bullying, cyberbullying, criminological prevention, countering extremism and terrorism.

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## **Introduction**

Violence-expansion among young people is one of the most discussed and burning topics all over the world right now. Young people often do not have the ability to take information with a grain of salt, which leads to the emergence of xenophobia, incitement of interethnic hatred, religious conflicts, including manifestations of bullying based on them, cases of school shooting, as well as attempts at suicide. Some young people join informal organizations of terrorist or extremist organization, where they are forced to commit illegal actions that can cause serious harm to the health and life of citizens.

The prevalence of violence in the educational environment has a direct interrelation with the deviant behavior of young people. The criminalization of the younger generation, due to a combination of social, economic, political and cultural factors, poses a threat to the security of any national state. These negative trends require an adequate and timely response from the competent law enforcement agencies, as well as a comprehensive and integrated scientific understanding.

An attempt to swiftly develop scientifically grounded and practice-oriented solutions inevitably leads to a simplification of the problem, the substitution of concepts or their misperception in the process of preventing deviant behavior in the youth environment. The subject matter of this study is the main forms of deviant behavior that are most common in educational institutions.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The aim of the study is to find out the most common forms of deviant behavior of young people in Russian educational institutions, their relationship, as well as criminalistical significant information about them. Within the framework of this article, the characteristic of the main forms of deviant behavior of young people will be described. In addition, the interrelation of these forms will be demonstrated, and typical information about their individual elements, which are important both for the investigation of a number of violent crimes and for their criminological and criminological prevention, will be described.

## **Literature review**

Various aspects of deviant behavior of youth and juvenile adolescents have already been the subject matter for Russian and foreign scientists – criminologists, criminalists, sociologists, teachers, psychologists (Boronoev, 2007; Kopovay, 2016; Baburin, 2017). Moreover, analysis of the scientific literature has led to the conclusion that in recent years this problem has been studied more by sociologists and educators than by legal scholars.

Scientists-criminologists have paid a lot of attention to the prevention of deviant behavior of young people. In particular, Sibiriyakov (1998) formulated the concept of deviant behavior of young people, determined its possible framework, indicators, proposed a classification of its main varieties, considered the specifics of the determinants of the main varieties of deviant behavior of young people under the conditions of socio-economic reforms being carried out in the country; summarized and analyzed modern foreign concepts, forms and methods of social control and prevention of deviant behavior of youth, proposed a unified state system of measures to prevent deviant behavior of youth.

A socio-criminological analysis of the prevention of juvenile delinquency was carried out by Volkova (2000), who considered the main directions of optimization of elements of the social environment in preventive work with adolescents, including in educational institutions. The peculiarities of the prevention of juvenile group criminality are studied in the works of Agafonov (2004); studies of the conceptual apparatus, forms and characteristics of deviant behavior of minors, its prevention contain the works of Sevastyanova (2004). An analysis of these and a number of other studies devoted to the problem in question leads us to the conclusion that this kind of research was conducted more than 10 years ago. These studies took into account the current socio-economic and other conditions of development of society, the role of young people and minors in it, so among the forms of deviant behavior of young people mainly studied drunkenness, alcoholism, vagrancy, teenage prostitution.

However, a qualitatively different transformation of the deviant behavior of young people has become especially evident in the last decade. Therefore, new forms of violence are spreading in educational institutions, such as bullying, cyberbullying, school shooting, manifestations of the ideology of extremism and terrorism, and a number of others, which requires appropriate scientific research and development a system of measures for prevention and counteraction.

This is also confirmed by the results of foreign studies dedicated to the spread of new forms of violence among young people (Inchley, et al., 2020). The study of these problems is just beginning in Russian criminology. For example, the works of Antonyan and Baumstein (2019), Afanasyev (2020) reflect only certain aspects of the study of bullying and cyberbullying as methods of criminal influence on the victim in the mechanism of criminal behavior of intentional infliction of grave harm to health and threat to the safety of children.

Criminalist scientists developed a whole complex of problems of methodology of investigation of extremist crimes in the last ten years (Yatskina, 2020; Kuleshov, 2018; Eremin, 2016; Skorikov, 2014; Davydov, 2013 etc.). However, the research of this phenomenon as a form of deviant (criminal) behavior of youth is still of a point nature. General problems of investigation of lucrative crimes committed by minors were once studied by Dymov (2006), while in the last five years Grigoryan (2018) has investigated the specifics of investigation of crimes motivated by hatred or hostility committed by minors. Thus, there is an urgent need for a scientific study of criminological and criminalistic aspects of contemporary forms of deviant behavior of young people in educational institutions.

## **Methodology**

The methodological framework of the study is: theoretical methods, among which there is the analysis of the research subject based on the study of legal, psychological and pedagogical literature; sociological survey of target groups. For the purpose of this study, in 2021 the authors of the article, with the assistance of employees of the Department of Comprehensive Safety of the Educational Process of the Ministry of Education of the Kaliningrad region, conducted an anonymous survey of students and teachers of general education schools in the region on various forms of deviant behavior in the educational environment. A personalized questionnaire with a list of questions was developed for each of these target audience groups and was filled out online at the "Google Forms" service. This method made it possible to guarantee anonymity for respondents, to cover educational institutions in remote municipal districts that rarely participate in this kind of research, and to optimize the accessibility and timing of the survey and the subsequent analysis of the results.

In the sample of the first target category ("school teachers") the emphasis was on teachers working directly with students, including classroom teachers, as well as those involved in administrative and managerial work (e.g., supervisors of academic departments). We also took into account the fact that each target group has a certain set of significant characteristics that are important for interpreting and evaluating the results of the study. Thus, over 70% of the surveyed teachers have ten or more years of teaching experience. The overwhelming number of respondents-teachers (80%) are married. In addition, 76% of the surveyed teachers are characterized by a high degree of informatization, they have profiles in social networks and messengers. A brief description of the students who participated in the survey: the average age is between 14 and 18 years old; 55% of those surveyed were female; 58% had lived in their community since birth and 32% had recently arrived; 60% were raised in a full family. The choice of the age category of students for the survey is due to the age of criminal responsibility of minors in the Russian Federation - from 14 to 18 years, their ability in answering the questionnaire to take into account the generalized experience of more than seven years of communication among their peers. In addition, young people are the most vulnerable social group to external influence, within which an accumulation of protest potential in various forms occurs. The practical realization of this potential, if it reaches a bifurcation point, can lead to the commission of criminal acts that cause physical harm and moral suffering to a large number of citizens.

In total, 323 teachers and 1649 students from schools of the Kaliningrad region took part in the anonymous survey, which made it possible to obtain the following results.

## **Results**

In the context of the study of the most common determinants of youth deviant behavior, the analysis of the completed questionnaires showed that about 15% of the students surveyed have a deficit in communication. Thus, 140 students responded that they have only one friend, and 86 people noted that they have no friends at all. Moreover, 63% of respondents indicated that there were students in their class with whom no one communicated. Even more informative were the responses to the next question, where 45% of respondents noted that they had students in their class who did not get along with the other kids and for that reason left for another school.

Another important marker of the informatization of youth deviant behavior according to our study is that most of the surveyed students (70%) answered to an open-ended question about their preferred leisure time that they spend their free time in the internet surfing.

It is noteworthy that 23% (384 people) indicated watching television as the form of leisure activities, while according to the opinion generally accepted in the special literature in the last five years: "young people do not watch TV (Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2019). Meanwhile, the television is the main source of information for the interviewed teachers. For example, the analysis of questionnaires filled out by teachers showed that 64% learned about the problem of terrorism and extremism from television programs, and only 20% learned this information from the Internet.

Loss of sleep, appetite, nervousness, and apathy due to poor academic performance, which can also act as determinants of youth violence, were reported by 36% of surveyed school students.

Describing the criminogenic situation in the educational environment, 61% of respondents-teachers noted an increase in physical violence over the past ten years. At the same time, psychological violence has increased significantly over the same period, according to 68% of respondents.

Among contemporary forms of deviant behavior of young people in educational institutions, more than 35% of respondents-teachers named bullying and cyberbullying, hooliganism, other forms of physical and mental violence; and more than 34% of teachers know these cases from their own teaching practice. The results of the survey allowed us to establish that the cases of bullying and fights between students are the most common among young people.

On a permanent basis, 34% of respondents among students encounter physical methods of conflict resolution, while only 21% of respondents have never seen a fight between peers (among teachers, 17% have never encountered a fight in educational institutions). More than half of the surveyed pupils (53%) believe that any aggressive behavior toward them should be responded back.

In relation to bullying, 63% of students said they had seen another student being systematically hurt, insulted, or intimidated by peers. However, 17% indicated that their bullying took place in cyberspace, and 20% of those surveyed would not tell anyone about regular bullying of their classmate by other students. The 66% of surveyed teachers are also aware of cases of bullying among young people. In addition, 75% of teachers believe that cases of psychological pressure, boycotts, insults, etc. among students occur mainly on the Internet.

It is particularly disturbing that 22% of students have encountered manifestations of terrorist ideology in cyberspace.

Meanwhile, the results of the analysis of the questionnaires filled out by teachers showed that they have a very diffuse idea of the essence and content of various forms of youth violence. That way, 19.2% of the interviewed teachers are not familiar with the concept of "cyberbullying", in relation to the term "school shooting" the indicators are even more alarming - 47% of the respondents first learned about the criminal phenomenon of "school shooting" during the survey.

According to the results of processing the completed questionnaires, it was found that not enough time is devoted to the issue of prevention of extremism and terrorism among young people. Thus, 65% of the surveyed students have never participated in anti-terrorist activities conducted at school. These results are in some contradiction with the answers of teachers, according to which only 20% of respondents noted that they had never organized or participated in school anti-terrorist activities. It is also noteworthy that 72% of teacher respondents had not received special training, such as in-service training, on dealing with situations of school violence (bullying, cyber-bullying, gender-based violence, school shooting, etc.).

Meanwhile, 76% of teachers said that extracurricular work with students should be strengthened. In regard to specific measures aimed at preventing and stopping the spread of violence in the educational environment, surveyed teachers identified: individual conversations with students (82%); conducting topical lessons (67%); inviting representatives of law enforcement agencies to give lectures (70%); and discussing the problem in class (66%). Most teachers see a need to involve a school psychologist to work with students, when cases of physical violence between students arise. Only a few teachers see the relevance of appealing to the administration of the educational institution and authorized law enforcement agencies.

## **Discussion**

The anonymous survey conducted as part of this study confirmed the repeatedly stated hypothesis of other researchers about the increase in the number of cases of violence among youth over the past few years (Inchley et al., 2020).

However, the data obtained on the prevalence of bullying as a form of deviant behavior among young people in Russia fully corresponds to the similar situation observed in some European states (Meriläinen, Käyhkö, Kõiv & Sinkkonen, 2019). The compliance rate (tolerance) of bullying among students who do not choose to inform anyone about regular bullying of their classmates is also consistent with the results of earlier research on this issue by foreign researchers. (Salmivalli, 2010).

Similarly, the determination of half of the students to use physical force to protect their violated rights and interests indicates a general trend toward the criminalization of youth, which has been diagnosed before (Sood & Berkowitz, 2016).

In addition, the hypothesis of the actualization of the use of modern information technology in order to intimidate, harass, humiliate, persecute or otherwise exercise negative psychological impact on the participants of the educational process on the Internet was confirmed empirically (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018). Meanwhile, the thesis that victims of cybercrime have the lowest level of mental well-being (Mark, Värnik & Sisask, 2019) could not be confirmed or refuted.

Additionally, the tendency to self-isolation and lower levels of social communication among juveniles identified in this study poses a serious threat to the criminal situation in the context of the peer community integration theory developed by Pörhölä. According to the provisions of this theory, the level of integration of a person in the reference environment in childhood and adolescence is reflected in later life in their ability to integrate into other peer communities (Pörhölä, 2016). Meanwhile, the low level of socialization of a person in society is one of the determinants of deviant behavior, including illegal behavior.

Besides the information about the degree of socialization, data on the minor's use of violent conflict resolution methods both at school and out of school, the duration of residence in a particular area, school performance, the presence of alcohol or drug addiction, family status, relationships within the family, previous experience of illegal activity are of quite interest for the purposes of crime detection and investigation. Each of the above markers individually may not have a significant forensic value, but acting in correlation, they predetermine a high probability of criminalization of their carrier as he grows up (Khlomov, Davydov & Bocharov, 2019). Similar predictors of youth criminalization have been noted in other studies (De Ribera, Trajtenberg, Shenderovich & Murray, 2019).

We should also agree with the majority of scholars that cases related to the spread of physical violence in the educational environment and bullying, which is a striking example of psychological violence, correlate as general and particular, where physical harm is the extreme form of impact on the victim of aggression (Ttofi, Farrington & Lösel, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis and scientific interpretation of the results of our anonymous questionnaire survey of 1,649 high school students and 323 teachers of secondary schools of the Kaliningrad region, as well as taking into account the analysis of the results of already conducted scientific research, it was found that the most common forms of deviant behavior in the educational environment are illegal acts related to physical violence and bullying (cyberbullying). At the same time, both forms of deviant behavior are closely interconnected, because bullying against a particular minor can escalate into physical violence, which can be initiated by both the victim of bullying and the aggressor. In addition, the survey revealed that the majority of interviewed teachers with ten or more years of teaching experience noted a negative trend toward an increase in physical and psychological violence in the educational environment over the past ten years.

The main determinants of deviant behavior in the educational environment are: the concept of self-isolation of personality, demanded in the youth environment; a sense of frustration and psycho-emotional stress caused by low academic performance; difficulty in communication between students and teachers associated with the polarity of sources of information consumption.

The survey results demonstrated that today bullying tends to take place in cyberspace, allowing the aggressors to act permanently, indirectly, and anonymously if desired. The factor of tolerance in relation to bullying among students, who do not prefer to inform anyone about the regular bullying of their classmate, is noteworthy.

A similar tolerance from the side of students is observed in relation to physical violence as a tool for resolving possible conflicts in educational institutions. Such a situation requires, in our view, increased measures to build student trust in first responders to such situations, primarily trust in teachers. Based on the results of the research, we can conclude that the system of measures to identify, prevent and counteract bullying should include, first of all, mandatory special training for teachers, for example, as part of professional development, on how to respond adequately to such situations. It should be understood that such a response must be systematic for each situation and not just for one participant, but for all students actively or passively involved in the bullying.

One of the most pressing and yet least developed problems today is the problem of countering such a form of deviant behavior of young people in the educational environment, as cyberbullying. Although the survey found that a significant number of teachers use social media and messengers to communicate with students, cyberbullying situations tend to be outside of that interaction. In this connection, an increase in the level of trust in the teacher or school psychologist as a subject promoting a favorable environment in the classroom, helping to form the correct understanding and attitude to the current situation, its consequences for each participant and observer, becomes one of the essential conditions for identifying and counteracting this form of deviant behavior of school students. The second important factor, in our opinion, is the ability of teachers and psychologists to diagnose manifestations of such situations by the behavior of schoolchildren. Training teachers and psychologists to respond to such situations requires significant preliminary work by researchers to study the phenomenon of cyberbullying, its manifestations, the study of behavioral markers, the development of an appropriate set of psychological techniques, etc.

The predictive analysis of the above results suggests with a high degree of probability that the further spread of violence in the educational environment will lead to a significant deterioration of the overall criminogenic situation. Juvenile deviant behavior can also appear in extreme forms – in the form of committing acts of extremist or terrorist orientation, which pose a special threat to the security of the country.

Considering that countering the ideology of extremism is one of the priorities of state policy, it is necessary to develop a system of appropriate compulsory comprehensive preventive measures in the system of school education. Prevention of extremism in the youth environment should be carried out simultaneously in a variety of spheres that influence the formation of a child's personality: in the family, school, in various educational institutions in the family, as well as on the Internet. Among the measures of prompt response to the current situation, it seems necessary to recommend increasing the interaction between schools and law schools as part of the legal education program "Street Law" in legal clinics, including in a remote format, which will significantly increase the coverage of the audience. This measure is able to respond rapidly to the request for thematic lessons for students about the basic concepts, consequences, responsibility of minors for various forms of deviant behavior in educational institutions. Similarly, it is necessary to strengthen and systematize cooperation between schools and the relevant departments of law enforcement agencies. The meeting of school students with law enforcement officials is also one of the preventive measures of legal information and legal education of the younger generation.

The research also led to the general conclusion that the prevention of various forms of deviant behavior in the system of secondary education requires organizational, personnel and methodological reinforcement.

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