



Exploring Juvenile Delinquency: An in-depth Analysis through the Lens of Differential Association Theory

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Abstract: This study delves into the intricate dynamics of adolescent juvenile delinquency by examining the Lens of the Differential Association Theory. Focused on the unique context of adolescents at SMAN 21 Bandung, the study employs qualitative research methods to explore the multifaceted relationships between differential association Dynamics and juvenile delinquency. Through in-depth analysis, including comprehensive interviews, observations, and literature reviews, the research sheds light on how adolescents learn and internalize deviant behaviours within their deviant subculture. The findings indicate that deviant behaviour develops a learning process where deviance is perceived as something. Additionally, deviant behaviour is the behaviour of fellow perpetrators in deviant subcultures, establishing an environment in which they feel secure engaging in delinquent activities since there is no one to interfere or report them. The existence of negative interactions serves as a trigger for teenagers to engage in delinquency, highlighting the need for increased supervision from parents and teachers. Furthermore, it is necessary to implement tactics to tackle teenage delinquency within educational institutions, aiming to deter their engagement in deviant behaviours.

Keywords: Subculture; Juvenile Delinquency; Differential Association

A. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents presently face complex issues that involve various aspects, such as family Dynamics, the school and home environment, juvenile delinquency, and the possible adverse effects of digital technology, which they may find difficult to challenge (Kartalina & Widodo, 2020). Juvenile delinquency encompasses a broad spectrum of behaviour, behaviour actions that are seen as socially unacceptable to activities that break laws and constitute criminal behavior (Khbehaviourt al., 2021). Juvenile delinquency typically refers to those who are legally classified as minors (Raturi & Rastogi, 2022).

Juvenile delinquency is a complex societal problem that is influenced by a multitude of interconnected causes. Economic inequalities have a substantial impact, as poverty and restricted access to resources contribute to the susceptibility of adolescent susceptibility. Family dynamics significantly influence the emotional wellbeing and behaviour of young wellbeing; behaviours of broken homes, abuse, and neglect can result in emotional pain and rebellious tendencies (Jannah et al., 2023). Social interactions and associations within deviant subcultures can significantly

contribute to the manifestation and perpetuation of deviant behaviours among adolescents (Nwalozie, 2015).

It is intriguing to note that numerous previous studies have indicated that a significant number of instances of juvenile delinquency are attributed to the influence of peers and involvement in deviant subcultures among adolescents. For example, research conducted by Fachry et al. (2024) explain that beyond economic factors, the influence of peers, characterized by exposure to criminal behaviours and detachment from anti-criminal norms, notably impacts teenager's engagement as drug couriers. Moreover, Yulianto et al. (2024) elaborate on the impact of peers or deviant subcultures and family support on alcohol consumption, as well as exposure to media portrayals that positively depict alcohol, highlighting their significant association with adolescent drinking behaviour.

Suppose we delve into the studies mentioned previously. In that case, it becomes apparent that prior research has concentrated on establishing the extent and significance of the influence exerted by deviant subcultures on juvenile delinquency. Consequently, deviant subculture is considered as one of contributor to juvenile delinquency. So, the narrative focuses more on the impact of deviant subcultures on adolescents.

However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that previous research has not thoroughly explored the intricate process experienced by teenagers in deviant subcultures, so teenagers end up adopting juvenile delinquency. There exists a complex and intriguing journey that warrants detailed exploration.

This research endeavours to contribute to the existing literature on adolescent behaviour within deviant subcultures. In contrast to prior studies that primarily focused on assessing the magnitude of deviant subculture influence, this article employs Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory as an analytical framework. Through this Lens, the study embarks on an extensive exploration, delving into the nuanced process experienced by adolescents within deviant subcultures, ultimately the process leading to the adoption of juvenile delinquency.

Through an in-depth exploration, we aspire to find not only exploration about how adolescents adopt juvenile delinquency within deviant subcultures but also what types of juvenile delinquency occur and strategies used to tackle juvenile delinquency. Situated within the unique context of adolescents at SMAN 21 Bandung, this study contributes to the academic discourse and holds practical implications for educators, policymakers, and parents. By immersing ourselves in this in-depth analysis, we can provide valuable insights that pave the way for informed interventions and strategies to address and mitigate juvenile delinquency effectively. Thus, education can offer benefits for the future of children by preventing stress and treating trauma in adolescents (Hidayat, 2022)

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, which yields descriptive data. The reason for selecting this method is that the researchers aim to conduct an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency occurring at SMAN 21 Bandung. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews and non-participant observations to obtain the necessary data. Informant selection was carried out using purposive sampling with the following criteria: 1) Students of SMAN 21 Bandung were involved

in juvenile delinquent behaviour. 2) Parents of students who can provide information related to delinquent behaviour. 3) Teachers who have direct involvement with incidents of delinquent behaviour at the school. Consequently, ten informants were selected, consisting of 5 students involved in juvenile delinquency, 4 of their parents, and the vice principal in charge of student affairs. Non-participant observation techniques were used to directly observe the forms of juvenile delinquency occurring at SMAN 21 Bandung. The research was conducted in October 2023. The research location was SMAN 21 Bandung, located at Jalan Manjahlega No. 29, Bandung. SMAN 21 Bandung was chosen as the research location because it is one of the schools whose level of juvenile delinquency is quite well-known to the public due to several cases of juvenile delinquency going viral on social media.

C. LITERATUR REVIEW

1. Deviant Subculture

The discourse on subculture is a fascinating subject within the broader conversation on culture and society. This term has been characterized as something distinct and anything that opposes the prevailing culture (Blackman, 2014). The term "subculture" is frequently employed to elucidate deviant behaviour, specifically in the context of adolescent delinquency (Barmaki, 2016).

Deviant subculture pertains to collectives or communities characterized by rules, values, and behaviours that deviate from those of most of the society or other subcultures. Deviant subcultures are characterized by persons who possess ideals and practices that are commonly perceived as deviant or in contravention of prevailing social norms. This might occur as a reaction to pressure or discontentment with the ideals or customs upheld by the majority of society (Prima et al., 2003).

This subculture assimilates values and norms from the prevailing culture, only to repudiate them by regard their deviant values and norms as acceptable and exemplary standards of behaviour. Consequently, this deviant subculture tends to participate in actions they perceive as valid despite being regarded as abnormal by the prevailing mainstream society (Prima et al., 2003)

2. Juvenile Delinquency

Adolescence is often identified as a period of rebellion, where individuals experiencing puberty tend to face various emotional disturbances, distance themselves from the family environment, and encounter problems in multiple aspects of life, both at home, in school, and the social environment (Unayah & Sabarisman, 2016). This term is also known as juvenile delinquency. Santrock (2006) states that juvenile delinquency encompasses various behaviours, ranging from socially unacceptable behaviours to criminal acts. According to Willis (2012), juvenile delinquency includes actions by adolescents that go against the law, religion, and societal norms, causing harm to others, disrupting peace, and harming themselves. In other words, juvenile delinquency can be interpreted as adolescent behaviours that violate norms and rules, causing harm to both one and others.

3. Differential Association

Formulated by Edwin Sutherland in the 1930s, Differential Association Theory emerged as one of the earliest sociological theories of crime. Sutherland proposed that deviant behaviour is learned through interactions in social environments, mainly through differential associations with individuals who hold deviant values and norms. The presence of Differential Association Theory has inspired the emergence of several new theories, which resulted in the development of Differential Association. These theories include the General Strain Theory and Social Learning Theory.

Social Learning Theory was developed by Ronald L. Akers and Robert L. Burgess in the 1960s and 1970s, extending Sutherland's ideas by incorporating principles of operant conditioning and social psychology. It emphasizes the role of reinforcement and punishment in the learning process of deviant behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2019). Building upon Differential Association Theory, General Strain Theory was developed by Robert Agnew in the 1990s as a response to the limitations of previous strain theories. General Strain Theory posits that individuals engage in criminal behaviour as a coping mechanism to alleviate strain or stress (Jang & Johnson, 2003).

Despite the development of theories that emerged after differential association, Differential Association Theory possesses several advantages compared to its successors for exploring juvenile delinquency. While Social Learning Theory and General Strain Theory primarily focus on individual-level processes, Differential Association Theory strongly emphasizes the role of social interactions and delinquent peers in shaping juvenile delinquency. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the social determinants of juvenile delinquency from a sociological perspective.

To explore juvenile delinquency from the perspective of the differential association theory, we can delve into the nine propositions put forth by Sutherland (1947) :

1. Deviant behaviour is learned, not inherited. This indicates that someone not trained in criminal behaviour does not inherently create such behaviour.
2. Deviant behaviour is learned through communication. This communication occurs both verbally and non-verbally.
3. Learning deviant behaviour occurs within intimate groups: Sutherland stated that only small groups interacting directly can influence deviant behaviour. Therefore, Sutherland emphasized that friends or family are likely groups to initiate deviant norms and principles.
4. Learning deviant behaviour consists of (a) how to do it and (b) motivation, impulse, rationalization, and attitudes.
5. Motives and impulses are learned from the law's definition of good or bad. This means that if a teenager is around people who consider the law something to be followed, the teenager will do so. Conversely, if a teenager is around people who consider the law something to be violated, the teenager will break the rules.
6. One becomes deviant because one believes that breaking the law is more advantageous than following it.
7. The inclination toward deviant behaviour varies in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. This means that the longer someone engages in deviant

behavior, the more frequently and intensely someone is exposed to a set of attitudes about deviant behavior.

8. The mechanism of learning deviant behaviour is similar to the mechanism of learning conformity values; therefore, the process of learning deviant behaviour is taught in the same way as conformity values are taught.
9. Deviant behaviour and conforming behaviour are manifestations of the exact needs and values. In other words, the goals of deviant and conforming individuals are the same. For example, a thief usually steals to get money; an honest worker also works to earn money.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Juvenile Delinquency at SMAN 21 Bandung

SMAN 21 Bandung witnesses a variety of manifestations of juvenile delinquency, ranging from minor to extreme. Uniform rule infractions at SMAN 21 Bandung are classified as a typical kind of juvenile delinquency. Violations include wearing too-tight uniforms, excessive use of accessories, and projecting characteristics associated with specific groups. Students engage in these violations within this setting as a means to establish a unique identity that reflects their association with a particular group, especially from a deviant subculture.

Vandalism is a prominent issue associated with juvenile delinquency at SMAN 21 Bandung. The vandalism occurred on school walls and benches, with the words "Barduji" written on them. "Barduji" is a deviant sub-cultural group at school. Based on the interview, this action serves the dual objective of seeking recognition as a community member and striving to maintain one's reputation among peers. In other words, they employ acts of vandalism to strengthen their sense of self and social status within the group.

Truancy is another type of juvenile delinquency in which adolescents practice skipping school altogether or just during particularly difficult or tedious class periods. Such truant behaviours are frequently performed to reject educational procedures that are thought to be dull or challenging to comprehend. The delinquents skip school to avoid challenging coursework, freeing up time for them to partake in fun or entertaining activities.

Smoking is a habit that is becoming more widespread and drawing attention at SMAN 21 Bandung. Male and female students are the primary perpetrators of this smoking habit, which occurs when they use restrooms or even unsupervised outdoor spaces inside the school. Another juvenile delinquency is teenage fights. These battles can break out between individuals or groups, and interclass or interschool sporting events frequently start them. Tensions resulting from these competitions are what cause these conflicts. In keeping with fighting, there was an incident of a deviant sub-cultural group at school attacking another student in early 2023. This case involves four students from a deviant sub-cultural group and one student. This is a severe case that occurred during 2023 at SMAN 21 Bandung.

Another major problem among students is drug misuse and binge drinking, which is also known as "kobam" in Indonesian slang. The types of drugs used by students include marijuana, Tramadol, Alprazolam, and Riklona. Both "kobam" and

drug misuse predominantly involve students affiliated with deviant subculture groups, which are carried out when hanging out with their friends.

"Barduji" as a Deviant Subculture at SMAN 21 Bandung

The acronym "Barduji," which stands for *Barudak Dua Hiji*, is a group established in 2010 to support the extracurricular softball program at SMAN 21 Bandung. Although this organization was known for actively supporting softball activities, its reputation quickly changed from favourable to unfavourable. *Barduji*, which was once made up of kids involved in softball supporter activities, changed into a community where there were more and more infractions of school rules. Members of *Barduji* were initially limited to SMAN 21 Bandung students who were enrolled full-time; however, alumni eventually joined this group as well.

Current members of *Barduji* no longer adhere to the school's applicable norms. Vandalism, conflicts, smoking, breaking the regulations, and wearing items of a community like T-shirts and bracelets are examples of breaking school rules. *Barduji* not only disturbs the educational environment but also causes problems for the locals. These teenagers frequently congregate in nearby stores until late at night, upsetting the neighbourhood. Members of this group used to support extracurricular activities, but now they engage in actions that go against school policies and societal norms. This transition reflects internal dynamics that have created a deviant subculture in the school setting.

Deviant Subculture and Juvenile Delinquency

Deviant subcultures play a crucial role in influencing the behavior patterns of adolescents in the context of juvenile delinquency. Deviant subcultures offer teenagers a platform to articulate their individuality, explore their sense of self, and attain acknowledgement within their environment. Nevertheless, engagement in deviant subcultures can have adverse effects on adolescent behaviours, as the adoption of norms and beliefs that contradict societal norms can result in juvenile delinquency.

The occurrence of juvenile delinquency at SMAN 21 Bandung is caused by the influence of the deviant subculture known as *Barduji*, which is prevalent within the school's socialization process. An analysis of the socialization process or learning process within the deviant subculture can be conducted using the nine propositions of the theory of differential association.

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that juvenile delinquency is not hereditary but acquired through exposure to deviant subcultures. This is proven by the observation that certain adolescents, who had not previously participated in transgressions of societal norms, subsequently exhibit delinquent behaviour after being exposed to *Barduji*.

The learning process occurs through a process of interaction within a deviant subculture group. The deviant subculture group is an intimate or personally close group for adolescents. Viewing a group as a secondary family suggests that close-knit groups are essential in offering assistance, protection, and confidence, ultimately impacting an individual's choices. Numerous adolescents who are *Barduji*'s members perceive it as their secondary place of residence. This group serves as a social setting for interaction and a space where individuals attempt to establish their identity, gain recognition, and receive social support.

Subsequently, adolescents are prone to adopt juvenile delinquency as they perceive it to offer a more favourable alternative compared to conforming to established rules. The absorption of information from their environment reinforces the belief that diverging from societal norms yields benefits. Adolescents engage in juvenile delinquency when joining *Barduji* because they seek fame and respect from their peers at school.

The higher frequency teenagers are exposed to information from their environment suggests that engaging in deviant behaviour yields more significant advantages, the higher the probability adolescents will engage in such activity. By affiliating with a social group that upholds norms and values that endorse deviant behaviour, teenagers adopt the conviction that engaging in such acts is neither morally incorrect nor detrimental. The motivation for adolescents to engage in deviant behaviour is influenced by their awareness of the advantages and the support they receive from their social group. Due to the presence of members from the *Barduji* group, many newly enrolled teenagers perceive juvenile delinquency as an impressive behaviour or a prevalent behaviour, as the majority of these group members are involved in such activities.

Moreover, the emulation process of senior or influential characters within the *Barduji* group acts as the initial stage for advancing strategies and approaches for executing deviant behaviour. Adolescents typically acquire the motivation to participate in such behaviour from the guidance and assistance offered by seniors within the group. In addition, the motivation of adolescents to participate in deviant behaviour may stem from their aspiration to obtain support and protection from senior members or influential individuals within *Barduji*. This intrinsic motivation then emerges as a potent catalyst in the process of acquiring knowledge.

The first stage of deviant learning involves observing within the framework of acquiring deviant behaviour. When joining *Barduji*, adolescents initiate the learning process by observing their surroundings. Through observation, they pay attention to the actions and behaviours of seniors or influential figures within the *Barduji* group. Information about such behaviour can also be obtained through listening to and hearing stories, advice, or perspectives from other *Barduji* members that influence their views on a particular behaviour.

Next is imitating their senior in *Barduji*, which serves as a method for executing it. This replication may entail formulating strategies and approaches for executing deviant behaviour, occasionally intricate and straightforward. Adolescents tend to imitate their senior's behaviour deemed relevant to their needs or desires, whether it is deviant. In the final stage, they attempt to apply deviant behaviour. Additionally, deviant behaviour is shielded by its fellow perpetrators in deviant subcultures, establishing an environment in which they feel secure engaging in delinquent activities since no one is bold enough to interfere or report them.

The occurrence of adolescent delinquency is contingent upon factors such as frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. The learning experiences of juvenile delinquency undertaken by adolescents can differ based on the frequency, duration, and level of importance that adolescents assign to such activity. Frequency has a significant role in the development of deviant behaviour among adolescents. Continuous engagement within *Barduji* provides adolescents with the confidence to participate in juvenile delinquency. The more extended adolescents are exposed to

and engaged in *Barduji*, the stronger the demand for them to conform to *Barduji*'s standards. Regarding priority, this pertains to the degree to which adolescents prioritize engaging with the deviant subculture group. Adolescents who place a greater emphasis on the group are more likely to engage in juvenile delinquency.

Fascinating findings from this study shed light on the underlying reasons why juvenile delinquency persists within the deviant subculture, particularly in *Barduji*, and remains prevalent in schools. This is attributed to the protection provided by senior members of the deviant subculture, ensuring that their junior counterparts evade detection by school authorities. Consequently, a sense of safety is cultivated among juniors, enabling them to engage in mischievous activities without fear of repercussions or reprimand. Furthermore, seniors offer justifications to their juniors, legitimizing their delinquent behaviour and perpetuating a culture of innocence within the group, thus perpetuating a cycle of delinquency across generations.

Approaches to Tackle Juvenile Delinquency

Strategies aimed at mitigating juvenile delinquency resulting from deviant subcultures can involve interventions that target modifying the immediate environment and social interactions among adolescents. Here are a few strategies that can be put into practice:

1. Establishing an Optimistic Educational Setting

SMAN 21 Bandung is dedicated to offering a comprehensive educational setting which encompasses the availability of sports, arts, and extracurricular amenities. The facilities include contemporary sports fields, artistic spaces that inspire, and a range of extracurricular options such as Artafort, Angklung, Basketball, Badminton, English Oasis, Futsal, Mosque Youth Association (IRMA), Japanese Club, Journalism, Karate, Javanese Gamelan, KIR (Karya Ilmiah Remaja) Modern Dance, Choir, Flag Raising Team, Pencak Silat (Indonesian martial art), Palang Merah Remaja (PMR), Scout, Softball, Taekwondo, Theater, and Volleyball. Extracurricular activities offer students a range of opportunities to engage, cooperate, and express their creativity outside of regular class time.

SMAN 21 Bandung commences its learning activities with a sequence of customary exercises, which encompass Quran recitation and literacy, lasting for a duration of 15 minutes. On Fridays, from 06:45 to 08:00, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their non-academic talents through *Juma't Kabisa* activities. *Juma't Kabisa* provides pupils with a platform to showcase and acknowledge their individual or group talents on the school field, getting recognition from the school community. This activity not only fosters the development of beneficial habits associated with religious principles and literacy but also allows pupils to showcase and acknowledge their talents.

A further method for establishing a pleasant school atmosphere involves showcasing positive role models who can act as exemplars for teenagers inside and beyond their subculture. SMAN 21 Bandung is organizing an event where select alums who exhibit exemplary behaviour and possess inspiring narratives will be invited to share their experiences with the present student body. The activity known as "*Jumat Inspirasi*" (Inspiration Friday) takes turns with *Jum'at Kabisa*. Positive role models serve as sources of inspiration and assist adolescents in shaping their identities. Adolescents are more likely to strive for comparable accomplishments and

make constructive contributions to their environment when they witness successful individuals benefitting society. Hence, offering exemplary figures can serve as a robust basis for moulding the moral fibre, principles, and a positive perspective on life for teenagers, irrespective of the intricacies of the subculture they adhere to.

Guidance and counseling services comprise a range of elements that are designed to facilitate personal development and enhance overall welfare. Personal therapy offers emotional assistance and comprehension for individual matters, such as anxiety, depression, and relationship difficulties. Academic counselling assists students in selecting majors, designing study strategies, and addressing learning challenges. Professional counselling offers individuals guidance and evaluations about professional options, aiding in comprehending their abilities and principles. Group counselling, on the other hand, arranges sessions to address particular concern or enhance social skills through the promotion of mutual assistance among participants.

Personal development guidance assists individuals in identifying their personal development objectives and offers constructive comments to facilitate good growth. Crisis intervention programs provide immediate assistance and recommendations for those undergoing emotional crises. Mental health education provides instruction about mental health and techniques for managing stress, while family counselling services aid families in resolving disagreements or addressing communication issues.

Social development counselling facilitates the acquisition of social aptitudes and the cultivation of robust interpersonal connections. Lifestyle coaching services offer counsel on promoting a healthy lifestyle, encompassing strategies for managing stress, optimizing sleep patterns, engaging in physical activity, and attaining a harmonious life equilibrium. Guidance and counselling services provide comprehensive support to individuals, enabling them to effectively confront obstacles and achieve their maximum capabilities in all areas of life.

2. Delivering comprehensive instruction on positive values and societal norms.

SMAN 21 Bandung adopts a holistic approach to delivering rigorous education on positive values and societal norms to its pupils. The school's attempts to educate children about the law and the hazards of narcotics involve close collaboration with the police, military personnel, and *Badan Narkotika Nasional* (BNN). The establishment of positive habits is further enhanced by collaborating with the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), which routinely organizes Basic Student Leadership Training (*Latihan Dasar Kepemimpinan Siswa* or LDKS) to cultivate students' positive character. SMAN 21 Bandung is dedicated to fostering a collaborative environment that emphasizes both high-quality academic education and the development of students' strong moral values, enabling them to make responsible contributions to society.

SMAN 21 implements school regulations as a means of habituation and a technique to tackle juvenile misbehaviour. The development of school regulations is a collaborative effort that includes active involvement from students rather than being entirely initiated by the school. The process commences with the head of student affairs, who acts as the school's representative and is tasked with creating school regulations. The last phase is convening a meeting with student constituents

of the Student Council (OSIS), who serve as student delegates in the deliberation. The purpose of this discussion is to deliberate on the regulations that will be put into effect. In the event that any students express discomfort or objections, proactive measures will be taken to identify alternate alternatives. After the negotiation process with the students is concluded, the rules are presented in a forum for teacher comments. Once all parties endorse, these regulations are disseminated and circulated to the entire school community, encompassing parents, to foster a shared comprehension.

SMAN 21 Bandung creates a partnership with external entities, notably the Army Officer Candidate School (Pusdik Secaba TNI Rindam III Siliwangi), to address more severe cases of juvenile delinquency classified as serious charges. The objective is to offer students semi-military instruction under the guidance of appropriate authorities. This collaboration aims twofold: to provide physical training and have a deterrent impact on kids. The school aims to engage a third party to enhance the training experience and ensure alignment with the desired values of discipline.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Various forms of juvenile delinquency found at SMAN 21 Bandung range from minor breaches of uniform regulations to more serious offences such as drug consumption. The main aim of this study is to explore whether differential associations contribute to the rise of juvenile delinquency at SMAN 21 Bandung. An intriguing discovery from this research is the observation that teenagers involved in deviant subcultures are more inclined to engage in juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, adolescents who maintain ties with deviant subcultures for prolonged periods demonstrate a higher likelihood of engaging in juvenile delinquency. The onset of juvenile delinquency may arise from a learning process, as deviant behaviour is often perceived as socially desirable among peers. Additionally, teenage offenders receive support and protection from their peers, fostering a sense of impunity in engaging in deviant behaviour, as they believe no one will intervene or complain.

SMAN 21 Bandung employs diverse tactics to counter juvenile delinquency, such as fostering a pleasant school atmosphere through extracurricular activities, Quran recitation, literacy programs, and *Jum'at Kabisa* activities. In addition, it is crucial to offer comprehensive instruction on positive principles and societal standards while fostering cooperation with law enforcement, military personnel, *Badan Narkotika Nasional* (BNN), and *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI). Furthermore, engaging students in the development of school policies is essential. SMAN 21 Bandung also employs comprehensive advice and counselling services, encompassing personal, academic, career, group, mental health, and social development aspects

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