



Levels of prevention against anti-social and anti-juvenile behaviour in relation to early school leaving: summary of a study

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Abstract

The aim of this research work was to correlate school drop-out and anti-social and anti-juridical behaviour in the territory of the Region of Sicily (Italy), in order to identify suitable tools for prevention in the various family, school and social contexts in general. The data analysed were taken from a random sample of 337 young people aged between 14 and 22. Through the administration of an anonymous questionnaire, the degree of schooling achieved up to that moment, the year of interruption, if any, the motivations and the presence of any deviant behaviour were investigated. The questionnaires were administered between February and May 2023. The data were analysed from July to October 2023. The Matlab 2022 system was used. In the research conducted, and in keeping with previous work on the same subject, it emerged that males represent the subjects most affected by the problem of deviant behaviour as a result of dropping out of school. With regard to the age of those at risk, a higher percentage was noted in the 17-19 age range with 68% (62 units) present, followed by 21% (19 units) with 14-16 years, and finally 11% with an age of 20-22 years. This figure is worrying because the behaviour that is dangerous and in many cases highly deviant occurs in an age group that is very important for the development of tomorrow's adults (age 17-19). The data obtained call for serious reflection and work aimed both at prevention and at motivating and stimulating young people, assessing together with them the causes that lead them to choose as their 'best strategy' that of leaving school forever and never returning.

Keywords: *school dropout; society; deviance; family; prevention.*

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1. Introduction

Juvenile crime and deviance represent one of the issues of greatest social concern in Italy. National data confirm a situation that is dangerously close to a real emergency. Italian juvenile delinquency is growing by leaps and bounds. If we add to the aggressive models provided by adults the widespread dissatisfaction of society and the trivialisation of emotional distress, it is easy to understand the reasons why the phenomenon has spread like wildfire in society. Juvenile delinquency is a phenomenon that develops around the concept of deviance, i.e. the set of behaviours that deviate from social norms, violating them, and expressing the need to transgress in order to assume an identity within society. The expressions through which juvenile crime manifests itself are innumerable: among the most frequent are theft, muggings, robberies, extortion, vandalism, violence against persons, drug dealing and use, and alcohol use. In the worst cases it even goes as far as murder. Numerous studies have analysed statistical data and crime dynamics over time to identify the causes that drive young people to commit criminal acts. They range from the intention to emulate crimes committed by adults to the desire to go against the rules. One of the most frequent causes driving young people to commit crime is linked to family economic difficulties, i.e. states of poverty that limit and sometimes isolate and marginalise them. Remaining on the subject of marginalisation, it can be said that those who live in disadvantaged peripheral areas or belong to ethnic minorities are more likely to become petty criminals, due to the difficulty of being accepted by society. The main reason for increasing generational distress, and consequently an increase in crime, can be found in problematic family situations, in which traumatic events such as divorce, separation, bereavement and abuse occur. Generally speaking, the family is the main incubator of future baby criminals; inattention by parents, distracted by a thousand daily commitments, suffocating and too tight control, excessive permissiveness, can provoke violent and rebellious reactions, inside or outside the home. Teenagers tend by natural and spontaneous inclination to get together with peers who share similar characteristics: age, school, recreational activities, interests, etc. Adolescence is notoriously a delicate time, which can become difficult in the presence of particular family and/or personal conditions. Hence the need for the presence of social services to be increasingly incisive. The first approaches to the problem of juvenile deviance in society start from afar and refer, first of all, to the social, environmental, legal, competitive and marginal context, and then move on to the universe of more internal individual factors, through the contribution of behavioural science. With a view to integrating the various sociological and cognitive-behavioural theories, the most recurrent paradigm consists in considering juvenile deviance in general as the set of (increasingly) anti-social and anti-legal behaviours, resulting from the reciprocal interaction between cognitive aspects, affective influences and social/environmental factors of a dysfunctional nature. For an adequate developmental path, in fact, it is necessary that the minor, in the dynamic process of personalisation and socialisation, is adequately supported by the family, the school and society, which are the places where the young person acquires the first moral rules and the awareness that life is rooted not only in rights, but also in duties.

2. Hardship, marginality and dropping out of school

The growing presence in Italy of degraded areas in which a criminal fabric takes root, the lack or inadequacy of institutional support for the juvenile condition aimed at

guiding or acting as a filter for social behaviour, and the lack of significant relationships in the parent-child relationship are the main causes of youth discomfort (Speltini 2016). As found through numerous studies on the relationship between 'urban decay and juvenile deviance' on neighbourhoods in metropolitan areas, the elements that contribute most to the marginalisation of young people are the inadequacy or lack of the family, which does not fulfil its role as an agency of affection and rationality, and the lack of the school environment as an educational agency. When, due to any factor, exogenous or endogenous to the child and/or to the school institution, a condition of non-episodic malaise develops, one can speak of scholastic malaise, from which often, as the main outcome, dispersion derives'. It is on this malaise that one should intervene, since there is still "room for manoeuvre and action" (Regoliosi 2010). School discomfort is unfortunately a condition that, at various levels of intensity, affects all educational and social components: 1) the student, who absorbs to a greater extent the negative effect of the condition; 2) the teacher, who in any case experiences first-hand the difficulties and problems within the system; 3) the family, which reflects in its balance the quality of school performance; 4) the environment, which refers the reading of its cultural level to the summation of the various social situations and problems, including the school; 5) the public administration, which still fails to substantially affect the quality of the school. The circuits within which dispersion is triggered "are an expression of the different responsibilities socially associated with the roles of pupil, parent, teacher and friend" (Coluccia 2006). Therefore, school discomfort expresses the synthesis of a chain that embraces the entire socio-political system of a country. There are, therefore, intimate connections between types of society and the content of education. As Durkheim (2021) pointed out, moral values and norms have no absolute foundation, but vary according to the characteristics of the societies to which they belong. In contemporary society, the school, as a social organism, is affected by the ideological and value crisis of our time. It is a school in the society of uncertainty. The scepticism our time feeds on has led to the collapse of traditional values (truth, virtue, honesty, solidarity). Society is experiencing a crisis in values that 'also generates a crisis in education'. The contemporary school, in fact, "appears to be an open building site full of contradictions", since there is "a disconnect between the symbolic apparatus existing inside the school and the plurality of messages that children receive outside of it" and school drop-out signals the "moment of crisis of the school system with a lack of osmosis between the school environment and the social environment (Giroux, 2014). Due to this lack of ethical-moral references, to which are added family problems and affective deficiencies or social marginalisation, adolescents, during the formation of their personality, feel "inadequate" and feel an intimate and intrinsic need for meaning. Today, it is important to broaden the focus to include ethnic minorities and the weaker classes, because in some respects the dynamics of approach and reflection around education have these groups in common, and often the definitions coincide. It is from this perspective that we can say that the integration processes do not only concern the members of the foreign communities who live and work in our territory, but also those who emigrate from the south to the north, those who move from the countryside or the mountains to the city, those who find it particularly difficult to integrate and start a regular learning process in the school environment due to the environmental characteristics in which they live. Among these are those who live in conditions of social malaise, but also those who, although in conditions of sufficient affluence, cannot afford the considerable expenses necessary to support their studies (Cervia, 2014). To these must be added those individuals who, from a psychological point of view, appear to be more deprived of social skills, since

they too are part of the group represented by the class and occupy a marginal area within it that often presages phenomena of exclusion and marginalisation, phenomena that, in many cases, become increasingly serious in relation to the social class and the sphere in which they have developed. Discomfort, in this case, as one can well understand, has the psychological field as its field of expression and manifests itself through expressions such as loneliness, shyness, non-assertiveness, aggressiveness or restlessness (Volpi and Recchia 2009). If one accepts a general framework of this kind, which at first sight already appears rather vast and varied, one can glimpse how the teacher's action cannot fail to take into account the diversities present in the class, and how he or she is called upon to an intense pedagogical and psychological action aimed at bringing together worlds that are very distant from each other: this is after all the great challenge that goes beyond the irreplaceable needs for education and culture of which all young people are greatly in need (Morin 2001). Brint (2008), on the subject of the role of schools in modern societies, argues that in most countries of the world, school achievement is the main prerogative for achieving a better or worse professional career and indirectly, but consciously, greater or lesser wealth and social relevance. Schooling everywhere represents the main instrument of social selection, since it is the primary instrument in job orientation processes throughout the industrialised world, which is why even if not all children study properly, they are all judged according to their school performance, and it is this that defines their social position in perspective. Therefore, 'schooling is important both for social mobility and for the reproduction of inequalities'. In fact, as is well known, a higher educational qualification responds to a higher individuated income, which increases as the worker gets older. The increasing value of culture in modern society has given rise to so-called 'credentialism'.

By this term, social scientists designate the monopoly of access to the most prestigious and highest-paid professions by those who hold a university degree. The 'credentialist' organisation of American society, for example, made a university degree necessary for the occupation of all the most prestigious and remunerative job roles, proving to be indispensable even for the commercial sphere; for the other spheres, for which it had not been required until then, the need for a bachelor's degree was established. 'Credentialism' was seen from the outset by those who approved of its principles as a lift into which everyone could enter on the same floor and could exit wherever scholastic merit would lead them. Numerous studies, today as in the past, argue that the intense intellectual competition does not favour young people from the working classes at all, on the contrary, it hinders them. The image that emerges is not that of a lift, but rather that of a conveyor belt that takes individuals not very far from where they started: thus, school is seen (perhaps inappropriately) as an efficient reproducer of the inequalities already present in society, as it reinforces the advantages and disadvantages that characterise young people from different social backgrounds. These two different visions of schooling have, in the past, given rise respectively to the 'meritocratic' model and the 'social reproduction theory'; the former aims at the formation of an elite of talented men and women from all social classes to govern the nation, the latter identifies in this operation a substantial injustice. Indeed, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that 'in order to reproduce the labour force, schooling is designed to legitimise inequality, to level personal development to forms compatible with submission to authority, and to contribute to the resignation of youth to their fate'. With regard to the problem of identifying the relationship between social unease and school drop-out and even more so, statistics indicate that a substantial proportion of

students in Italy acquire the minimum qualification necessary to gain access to the best-paid and most representative jobs in society, and this as a reflection of the conditions of the family of origin.

3. The risk of deviance in the student category

Every student can become 'at risk' if certain circumstances arise that disrupt the intrinsic fragility of growth and developmental processes. For the detection and diagnosis of the risk condition Frymier (1992) identified correlations between five risk areas and found that exposure to even one of these areas severely increases the risk in the others. The five areas identified are: personal suffering, school failure, family socio-economic situation, family instability, family tragedy. This classification further highlights the intrinsic fragility to which immigrant children are exposed, regardless of their individual resources. 1) 'area of personal discomfort', which considers deviant behaviour by both the student and his family as risk factors: isolation from the group; rejection of the responsibility to grow up; belonging to youth gangs; anorexia or suicide attempts; personal use of alcohol or drugs; apathy, asthenia, dysthymia; abuse of various kinds; 2) 'area of school failure', which concerns risk factors in the actual school context lack of integration with peers; low school grades; failure in courses; age above class average; excessive absences; low self-esteem; low scores in various subjects; 3) 'area of family socio-economic situation' which takes into account risk factors such as: occupational status; parents' level of education and their attitude towards education; father's occupation and education; mother's occupation and education; parents' attitude towards education; educational styles and family communication; 4) "area of family tragedies" which refers to: situations of illness or loss of a family member or friend, loss of employment by a parent or serious or lengthy illness of a parent; death of a parent or family member; death of a friend (illness, accident, etc); student illness (more or less disabling); loss of a parent's job; 5) "area of family instability" which includes risk factors such as: family mobility or situations of separation or divorce; family breakdown; frequent moves; frequent changes of school; parental divorce. When analysing these criteria for the definition of risk factors, it is necessary to dwell on two important elements: the concept of 'probability' and the concept of 'dynamism': the category of students at risk is almost always associated with a probabilistic assessment.

Since it is not always easy to foresee failure and dropping out of school, the characteristic of 'risk' assumes only the value of probability that it may occur in combination with certain events and conditions (Dryfoos 1990); the risk status of a young person in developmental age should be considered dynamically, it tends to evolve and vary over time, both negatively and positively. Given the extreme variability of the risk condition, the question arises as to whether it is possible to identify its 'causes', especially at an early stage, when there is even a well-founded presumption of a possible difficulty, and whether adequate methods and instruments exist. The danger is that of settling for a diagnostic approach, which limits itself to emphasising the student's discomfort, without contextually activating a series of recovery initiatives (Tomasi 2000). The obstacle can be overcome with a type of identification based not on simple classification, but on the dynamic detection of learning processes and needs, in view of a preventive intervention (O'Sullivan and Tennant 1993), i.e. not separating the diagnostic moment from the therapeutic one, because the mere detection of the problem, if not accompanied contextually by an adequate intervention, transforms the announced risk situation into an

actualised damage. Socio-environmental' factors play a significant role in students' risk status. Careful consideration of socio-environmental factors has pointed out that some of them cannot be changed (e.g. gender, family or racial background cannot be changed). This helped to overcome an approach in which the subject was seen as 'passive and deresponsible' in order to focus more on the real responsibilities for certain risk situations. This has resulted in less attention being paid to socio-environmental risk conditions and more consideration being given to the real responsibilities for risk status, both of the school and of society. Sociologists agree in including the following in the category of serious socio-environmental factors: a) 'poverty': Kovach (1991), observes that the literature dealing with the poverty status of students shows a profile of students characterised by dropout and low achievement, although this cannot be considered an absolute risk condition.

Otherwise it would not explain the fact that one can find successful students in all social classes and conversely rich students at risk of school failure and dropping out; b) 'family violence': as Craig (1992) himself observes, there is a connection between family violence and the school performance of children/young people. The parental style of violence, both physical and verbal, has an influence on the child's cognitive style. The insecurity, inconsistency and unpredictability of a violent parental style do not allow the child/young person to develop an adequate ability to encode information, so that the child/young person's learning style comes into conflict with that required by the school environment; c) 'deviant behaviour with regard to school-related factors that favour deviance between the ages of 10 and 17, Dryfoos (1990), identifies "low expectations of teaching, poor participation in school activities, poor performance in the early school years, weak verbal skills, school absences, ineffective classroom management by teachers and the related effects are: school problems, school suspensions, dropping out of school. All this for immigrant children, for example, increases the perception of instability, because it is poverty itself that becomes a vehicle for violence and deviant behaviour: think for example of children/boys of mothers forced to be prostitutes or children/boys of violent fathers, because they are included in groups marginalised by other ethnic minorities. To the consideration that there is no precise and exhaustive definition of a 'student at risk' and that there are multiple risk factors, corresponds, consequently, the fact that even intervention methods cannot be considered definitive, precisely because students at risk represent an evolving problem. In the multiplicity of interventions, however, a common goal cannot be disregarded, namely that of fostering in students a capacity for flexibility and adaptation in the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills.

4. Prevention profiles against deviance and crime related to the phenomenon of early school leaving

In order to establish the correlation between school drop-out, deviance and criminality, different theoretical models have been applied over time: A first model, places prevention activity according to the developmental stage of criminal behaviour. The clinical model of Caplan (1964), presents three types of prevention 'primary prevention', which performs its function with the aim of removing or diminishing those criminogenic factors present in the physical and social environment, through educational, social policy and urban planning interventions; 'secondary prevention', aimed at the early detection of potential delinquents, especially young people, for whom interventions capable of reducing

the risk of anti-social behaviour are promoted; 'tertiary prevention', which comes into play following the commission of a crime and for this reason is aimed at avoiding recidivism. Other types of prevention, on the other hand, take into account the areas of intervention and the population towards which the intervention is directed. Therefore, there will be: 'social prevention', which coincides with primary prevention interventions and refers to disciplines such as sociology (Villanova 2006), community psychology (Contessa 1997) and eco-analysis of places (Peled 1990); 'situational prevention', aimed at physically removing the commission of crimes, representing a form of 'mechanical prevention'; a series of 'individual prevention interventions', which can also be carried out by referring to predictive research. A second operational model of a psycho-educational nature (Larson 1995) does not envisage interventions aimed at preventing stable deviant or delinquent behaviour or conduct in general, but a complex of actions directed at young people to foster situations of well-being, increasing their skills (training skills) and competences to cope with risk (better known as coping). Furthermore, the peer group experience represents another area in which adolescent deviance prevention interventions are concentrated (Blechman et. al. 1994). Here, the perspective of communication in the group is fundamental and is offered by an external interlocutor, who must avoid imposing behavioural indications that are experienced as threatening by the subjects.

This figure must encourage an open dialogue that allows young people to identify some possible alternative strategies available to them. In modern society there is, in general, a very high segment of young people between 14 and 21 years who neither study nor look for work. This figure is matched by an attitude of the institutions in charge, which regularly consider that the early exit from the education and training system of pupils is only linked to the social context in which they live and mainly to the economic and cultural poverty of territories of origin and families; a fact, therefore, considered almost normal in many Italian regions, especially in the south. Probably we do not want to become aware of the fact that the early school leaving of young people (often endorsed by families) is linked to the "lack" of interventions aimed at school, specialised operators of support structures to provide a satisfactory response to their problems, with the real risk of feeding the black market through small jobs in which they are exploited, or become labourers themselves for criminal organizations. It is known, for example, that in the southern regions of Italy and in the most degraded districts of the cities, entire families live from the drug trade, a criminal segment for which boys are indispensable because they have a direct relationship with buyers. In periods of increased presence in the territory of law enforcement, the boys act as lookouts, reporting to their associates, and possible buyers, suspicious movements that discourage the activity of dealing while mothers or other relatives have the task of weighing in the slings and wrapping the doses in foil.

It can be said, therefore, that the economic survival of a part of the inhabitants of the most degraded neighborhoods is based, in large part, on this illicit activity, while we know that the same boys draw, instead, little benefit in economic terms. It's been found that many young people find in crime an opportunity for social redemption, a way to have a sense of identity, a tool to compensate for their social inferiority. Crime, simple and organized, as well as immediate gain exerts a great power of fascination and seduction on young people by wiping out, in certain realities, the school's good intentions about building a legal conscience. As many chronicles have represented, the "centers of aggregation", as places of implementation of the values transmitted by the school (legality above all), or parishes and related activities, they do not seem to be liked by the criminal organisations of the South, because of the Mafia's influence, which hinders the

achievement of these objectives; both because they "risk" alienating young people from criminal activities that the family itself encourages, Both because, finally, they could induce children to have confidence in the State, to which they rely, in which to find a point of reference. In the southern Italian regions, more than in the north, school dropout is strongly related to deviant and criminal activities given the ability to manipulate, recruit and indoctrinate that criminal organizations are able to exercise. The educational model imposed on children in the family environment has been imbued with criminal disvalues since childhood, or is strongly influenced by their influence.

5. The role of the school in the control of youth deviations

School, as is well known, has always played an essential role in the growth of children and young people for its educational function. At this historical moment in which we are witnessing a weakening of the pedagogical power of the family and other institutions, it is necessary to remember that education takes on the task of training the human being with the knowledge of responsibility and creativity. Today, the school must inform and train the boy to make him responsible in his choices but must also create an education capable of enhancing the creativity of young people. The task of the school, therefore, is to create, especially in the "risk socio-scholastic uneasiness", awareness, knowledge of existential problems, the critical capacity for responsible and prudent choices of life, or lay the foundations of their future, through the retraining of the training offer. The school must, therefore, become a privileged place in which the boy learns to live by understanding the prevalence "of being over having". All this involves a great change, the birth of a new culture, that is, the adoption of a bioethical knowledge (Maggi and Ricci 2022). It is understandable how the need for a new school arises from the observation of a youth reality increasingly in difficulty, unable to develop critical thinking and take responsibility for all types of conduct. In this context of the "school of law" we must place the precious task of teachers who have the function of transmitting a knowledge no longer only abstract. They are assigned the task of promoting lessons that allow a critical analysis of reality and a reflection on existential problems.

The teacher thus assumes an important role in the education of young people who must accompany or accompany the one carried out by families (capable or incapable). The teaching team of a "pupil who adopts a deviant behavior has the task of putting in place interventions to help the child". A first stage consists in creating moments of rest among the teachers of the class and/or of the school to make a shared analysis of the problem. It would be important for an expert (today, we speak of school educator) in the field of youth deviations to guide the observation and sharing of the case or cases under consideration. A second step concerns the relationship between the deviant teenager and the teachers group. In such situations, information and knowledge on youth issues such as drug and/or alcohol intake, bullying, early sexuality is essential, but it is also necessary to: the adoption by teachers of intervention techniques such as counselling and mediation (Coppola 2022). The first technique consists of a two-way communication that provides for active participation among all involved. Active listening and empathy represent two key counselling skills to deal with an emergency situation of a boy experiencing discomfort. The teacher therefore has the task of creating a welcoming situation in order to listen to the student and focus the problem together. It is important that the recognition of discomfort occurs in both subjects otherwise no aid intervention will ever be successful. In the event that the school recognizes a problem of "deviance" in a student who, however, does not recognize that he

is a carrier of discomfort, it is understandable and imaginable that the interventions adopted by it will be of "suspensive" type and reporting to the family. The punishment "of expulsion from school" was based, over time, on the concept of prison, that is, in the discovery of "violations of rules" and adoption of re-education measures through the removal of the student from the school structure (Coppola 2022). Fortunately, today, things are changing and the total expulsion is becoming "socially useful suspension", that is, alternative measures to the school suspension in order to support the boy and his family in a rehabilitation program. This example of civil rehabilitation presupposes the consent and will of the boy and his family but sometimes this collaboration does not occur. In such cases, therefore, there is no assumption that can guide the teaching team to an alternative action to the expulsion. It is precisely in this rift between the individual and the school institution that the apex of the problem must be sought since "secondary prevention" and re-education must start from self-awareness of discomfort and a relationship of trust between the agents involved. Another educational strategy is the "mediation of conflicts": "the mediator works first of all to break the perverse and dual dynamics that two configgenti put into play (Ferraro 2022).

When you come into conflict with another person it is easy to remain closed in your anger and feeling of humiliation right away. It is unbearable to listen to the other and consequently you are led to respond with the same attack or with a deep silence. The school is a terrain where conflicting relationships are generated between peers or between individuals belonging to different hierarchical roles. Mediation is a way to solve the friction that is generated between students or between them and teachers. Learning mediation means first of all understanding the importance of listening and knowing how to practice it authentically. While it is undeniable, on the one hand, that schools must be able to restore order to the violation of a rule, on the other, it seems important, in order to promote a good climate and ensure peaceful coexistence, have tools for comparison based on a cooperative and non-competitive approach. The "mediation" wants therefore to realize a dimension of dialogue between the parties involved in a conflict in order to implement the reparative paradigm and then mend a violated social bond. The teacher, therefore, must be able to adopt various intervention strategies in order to understand and help a child in a state of distress. In addition to the information and the implementation of the techniques of interview and mediation, it is essential that the teacher collaborates with families and with all the local services. The co-construction of an operating mode is therefore essential for the success of a rehabilitation intervention.

The school is a specialized and formalized educational agency in a more rigid way than the family. It tends to increase its awareness of training objectives and procedures as much as possible; it receives precise tasks from society; it is based on pedagogical policies and theories. The school is also important as a "background" in the overall formation of the individual, and therefore also of his personality. In schooling, the child is introduced to an extended sociality, within an extra-family institution, in which the rules of common life begin to assume impersonal connotations (Mariani 2021). This means that the child who will become young no longer receives only educational requests on the basis of rules dependent on a choice carried out within the immediate context of existence, but must rather recognize the dependence of rules on a system of relationships that go beyond individual intentions and people, to be based on abstract values. In fact, with much more insistence than the family, the school asks for a certain action "because it is right" even beyond the will of the educator. At the same time, this occurs in a system of relationships based on personal knowledge and repeated and daily interaction in a social space where the

personality of each can grow in recognition of the value of sociality and cooperation, without losing the character of one's own creative autonomy.

Another aspect of the school's contribution to the development of the student's personality consists in its belonging to a precise historical-social reality, connected to a specific territory, to specific operators and groups capable of making determined pedagogical choices. In contemporary society schools can no longer consider their own educational activity, both in the field of personality and in all other directions, as an isolated reality, or as if it were purely sequential with respect to the role of other agencies. Today children and young people grow up at the intersection, rather than in the sequence, of the influence of different agencies. The family is confirmed and remains, even in the era of the great and radical transformations, the main source of the definition of personal identity, however, with the growth of social and geographical mobility, urbanization, consumerism, social massification, the school has often had to carry out functions of primary orientation and socialization previously entrusted entirely to the family (Bruner 2015). Among the tasks that the school must perform, there are those of "directing school choices by taking care of individual diversity"; taking into account the "styles and times of learning"; discovering the "potential areas of interest"; developing the "motivation and image of the Self"; respond to the "needs of belonging of individuals" by strengthening group activities; pay attention to "relations with students"; promote "research projects" in which young people feel active protagonists and not passive receptors; encourage "commitment and participation" of students in order to avoid disinterest and waste; "stimulate" curiosity, thinking, through solutions of practical problems.

The detached position taken by the teacher is then worsened by the fact that, in this period, the boy thinks of "suffice to himself", counting on an autonomy of action but still escapes his control, therefore, in the long run, this estrangement "can provoke a sense of "frustration" such that children end up facing negatively (because of the many conditionings), school attendance and show poor learning motivation and major communicative and relational problems, becoming, therefore, subject to the risk of abandonment, repetition and dispersion with real possibilities to take the roads of deviance (or even worse of crime) (Gaspari 2015). The school, as an organization with an institutional dynamic and educational objectives, is a reality whose functioning can be adequate or inadequate and, therefore, really rewarding or frustrating; it also sometimes constitutes a very competitive situation, which places specific demands, both relational and intellectual, relating to learning, but in addition to being an organization with its own characteristics, The school context is configured as a place "emotionally significant" for the teenager, which stands as emancipatory but, at the same time, is based on a relationship of dependence. This context is a reality in which the presence of peers is the crucial element. This can sometimes be a push to differentiation, but others can pose a danger of checkmate, a test for one's own abilities, and therefore an object of narcissistic or persecutory reinforcement through which is put to the test the image that the student has of himself and that does not always correspond to reality. The adolescent learns mainly through imitation, it is therefore evident the importance of the figure and the role of teachers in which, often, adolescents identify themselves. Identification takes place not only to facilitate the learning of school notions, but also to move on foreign objects those identifying energies of a symbiotic nature with which the individual had previously invested parental figures (Broccoli 2017). Therefore, learning, building personal identity and development are accomplished through a mechanism of displacement. In order to

facilitate identification processes functional to change, it is necessary to maintain an optimal distance between the "subject and the model"; otherwise defensive identifications may occur, such as identification with the aggressor or projective identification, which make sense against change (Giuliani 2020). Attending school, as well as being a place where the experimentation of one's own abilities and the exposure of one's own person can lead to frustrations and difficulties in finding one's own position in it and to feel accepted, is permeated by a series of "expectations" that parents pour out on the son or daughter. Often, therefore, the attendance of the school and the intellectual conquest towards which it leads are not intentional of the subject, but the outcome of a projection of the desires and personal projects of the parents, which, if they differ from the expectations and desires of the adolescent, may induce a negative emotional load in the adolescent, responsible for a large part of school dropouts and for initiations towards antisocial deviant conduct and feelings of repulsion of legality (Sessa 2022).

School experience is, therefore, extremely difficult, especially during adolescence; in fact, school difficulty is one of the most frequent symptoms of this period of life; it is one of the elective modalities through which the adolescent manifests an discomfort, an underlying more or less serious malaise. It is, however, necessary to distinguish between "transitional school difficulties", that is, momentary failures that every teenager at one or more moments of his school career may experience, and "lasting difficulties" which are organized in a stable system in the form of disinvestment of schooling, until the actual abandonment (Constantine 2019). An important cause of this failure may be due to excessive investment in activities other than school education, but also serious affective disorders that can affect school performance.

The separation from the parental objects, the increase of the drives, the narcissistic reworking, the type of defenses most used, are all aspects that can more or less interfere on the possibility of carrying out school tasks and that, Therefore, they can be relevant in the formation of school difficulties. Other difficulties or impossibilities to deal with different problems, such as those related to the processing of a sudden and unexpected intra-family bereavement and the possible consequent depression, can also interfere with school participation. Learning, from these premises, can be experienced as something distressing and threatening and thus confronts the individual with feelings of loss and experiences of incompleteness. Another factor of comparison with which the adolescent must measure himself is the tests of evaluation of school performance. They represent a highly challenging event both on the cognitive and emotional side, and provide a measure of the adolescent's ability to react to situations of high stress (Tagliani 2017). The educational functions within the school, as well as those concerning the primary educational agencies and all the secondary educational agencies present in the territory, are fundamental in order to encourage the development of mature, strong, autonomous and self-critical personalities. However, the strong social conditionings on the one hand, and the lack of educational proposals on the other, risk producing personalities that are easily conditioned, deeply insecure, willing to assume any identity (even deviant). This would allow him not to face the difficulties of an evolutionary process that is too demanding and that triggers escape mechanisms to banish all guilt and responsibility. In these circumstances, therefore, the family, the school, the society, must all feel engaged in an educational function, as an integrated educational project, which makes them responsible for future generations (Cardinals and Migliorini 2013). Another type of education that such a function requires is that of the habit of "critical thinking", that is, the ability to reflect and evaluate the various proposals before accepting them and knowing how to control one's own thinking by

subjecting it to verification, without being seduced by suggestive solicitations (Gordon 2013). It is also essential "an education in freedom", so we must urge young people to understand that alongside their freedom there is also that of others, and also help them understand that freedom is a difficult issue, which imposes a profound process of liberation from internal and external conditioning, from suggestions and open or devious manipulations. It requires, again, an education to "know how to manage the conflict" and to "use it in a positive sense", as well as, finally, "an education to legality", since the young person must become aware that for a group to exist there must be shared norms, which are not an unjustified imposition, but are functional to the achievement of common goals and are the basis for an orderly development of life (Carigre and Klingborg 2021). Adult society must therefore take into deep consideration the problematicity and extreme delicacy of the adolescent period, and of the phases preceding the advent of puberty, as the foundations on which a correct evolutionary process is based, and must act efficiently for the adolescent, providing that support and the indispensable means to direct growth towards positive directions. The data on suicide and attempted suicide of adolescents, emerging in the most recent statistics, do nothing but confirm what was said about the importance of adolescence, as a pivotal moment for the development and definition of identity and for the consolidation of adult personality (Tatarelli 2009).

6. Methodology

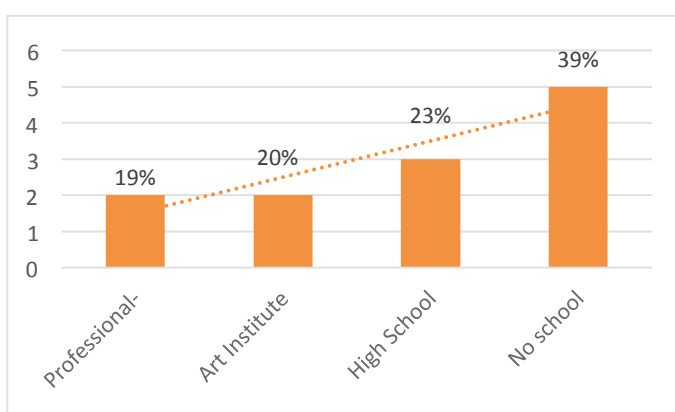
In sociological research, questionnaires are usually given to collect regular or infrequent routine data and data. The data analysed in this research was obtained from a stratified random sample. The aim of the research was therefore to identify the levels of prevention against antisocial and antiguridic behaviour of children of age, in relation to early school leaving in the territory of the Region of Sicily (Italy). The response rate is a key parameter of the survey and promotes understanding of the validity of the survey and the sources of non-response error; in order to maximize the rates of return, the questionnaires were designed to be as simple and clear as possible (Sudman et. al. 2000), with usefully targeted sections and questions. Research participants were No. 337. Questionnaires were administered between February and May 2023. The data was analyzed from July to October 2023. The Matlab 2022 system was used. Prior to this, participants were provided with an informed consent document that they signed, in which it was expressly stated that participation was voluntary. Respondents completed a 6-page questionnaire. The questionnaires, administered to n. 337 young people aged 14 to 22 years, aimed to identify the level of schooling until that moment reached, the possible year of school interruption, the reasons and the relationship with deviant behavior. Specifically, the first section of the tool required information regarding daily habits, the degree of self-esteem, prosocial and antisocial behavior, networks of friendships, and certain behaviors at risk for one's own and others' safety; the second section of the questionnaire dealt with individual planning and extracurricular habits, including, for example, information on how young people spend their free time, on the expectations for the future and on the perception of stress; the third section, was dedicated to the behaviors that the subjects, in a totally anonymous way, could list and that ranged from the use of substances (alcohol, psychoactive substances), driving vehicles under the influence of such substances, acts of school and extracurricular hooliganism, and crimes against property and person (assault, theft, vandalism etc.). In addition, the questionnaire used closed-ended questions, which

give the possibility to interpret the respondents' answers, on the basis of which comparative analysis can be made.

7. Results

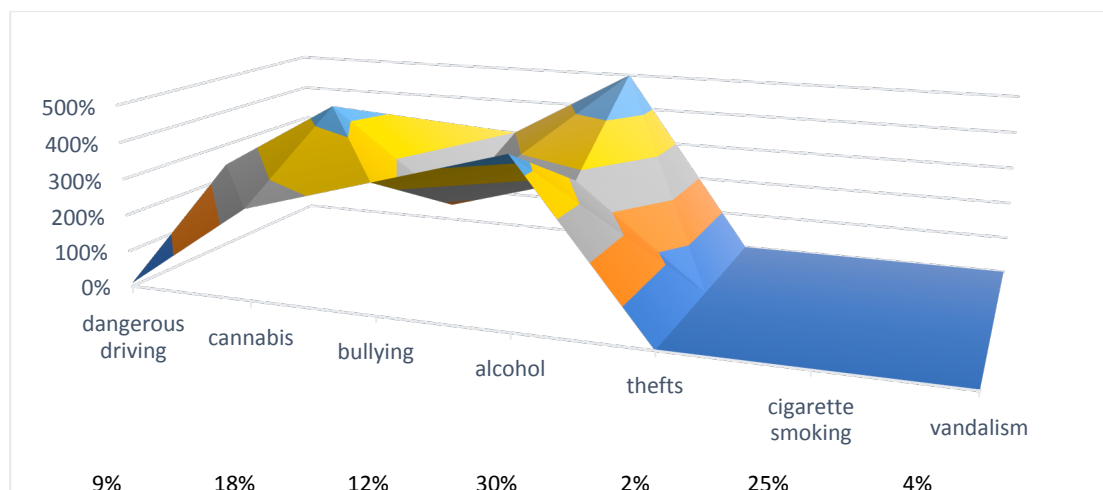
The sample consists of No. 337 subjects of which 136 (40%) females and 201 (60%) males; the average age is 17.8 years with a standard deviation of about ± 2.8 . The subjects still attending a school are 217 (61%) with a (almost) fair distribution between high schools with 78 units, vocational and technical schools with 63 units and art institutes with 66 units. 39% of the sample (130 units) stopped or finished their studies (diploma of maturity= 31 subjects) thus allowing to attest on 99 units (29%) the children already victims of school dropout (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Selected school address. N. 337 students



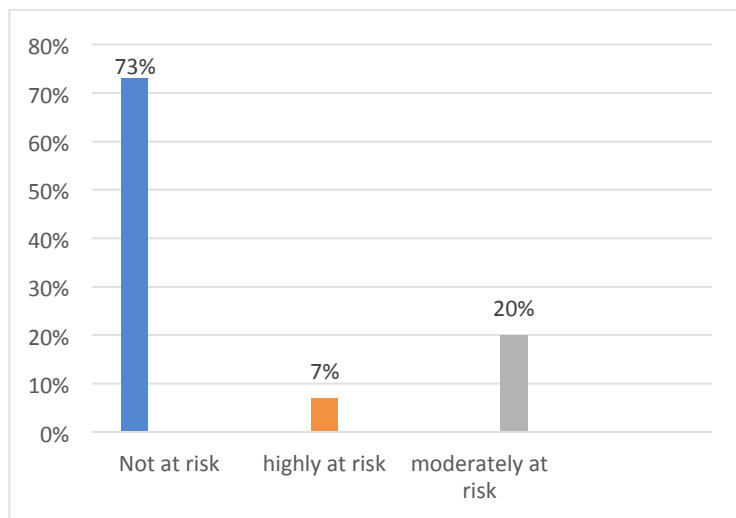
197 (58%) subjects were detected, some deviant behaviors ranging from drug use to theft. In Figure No. 2 these behaviours are shown in their entirety, not taking into account the sporadic or limited character of these behaviours, but only noting their existence or not during the course of the youth week.

Fig. 2 Deviant behaviors (Number of students 197)

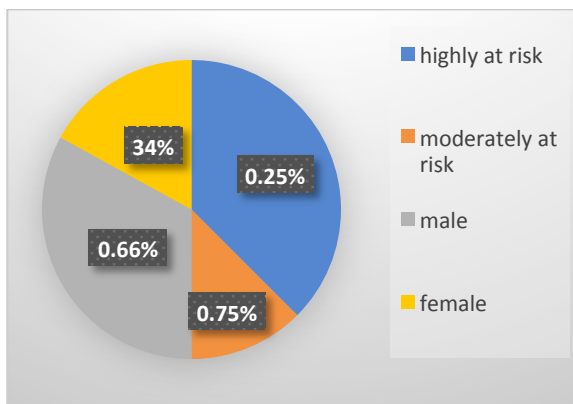


For the purposes of a more objective assessment of the 197 students, they were further reclassified into two subgroups to define behaviors at risk of deviance. Thus No. 106 questionnaires were excluded from the group of 197, because of the episodic and occasional nature of these behaviours (Fig. 3).

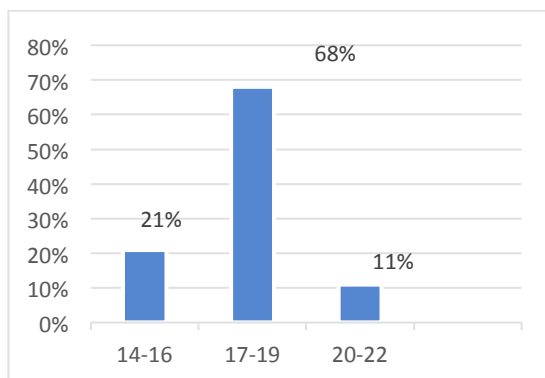
Fig. 3 Behaviors at risk of deviance



Of the 91(27%) questionnaires in which young people indicated behaviours that could be classified as risky (substance use, dangerous driving, verbally and physically violent bullying, etc.), 75% were moderately at risk while 25% were strongly at risk. The factors influencing this further diversification included the recurrence of such behaviours¹⁵ and the combination of more than two behaviours considered to be at risk (use of alcohol or substances and dangerous driving, or use of alcohol or substances and school hooliganism, etc). The sub-group of subjects at risk showed a much higher participation of males than females in dangerous actions. 34% (31 subjects) are represented by the female sex, while 66% (60 subjects) show how, as far as the sample taken into consideration, males are more involved in behaviors classifiable as risky (Fig. 4).

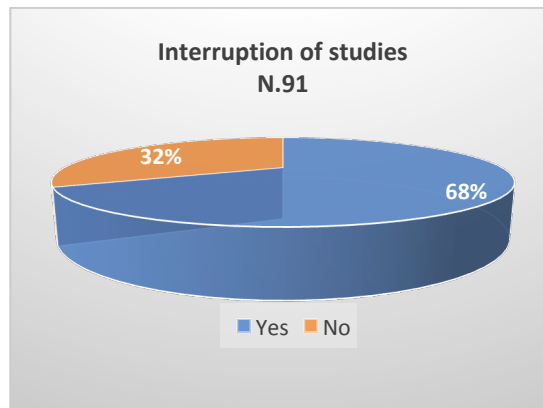
Fig. 4 Risk behaviours

As for the age of the subjects at risk, there is a higher percentage in the range 17-19 years with a 68% (62 units) of presence, followed by a 21% (19 units) with 14-16 years, and finally an 11% with an age from 20 to 22 years. This figure is worrying because the behaviours that are dangerous, and in many cases strongly deviant, happen in a very important age group for the development of tomorrow's adults (age 17-19) (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Age of 337 students in research and risk of deviance

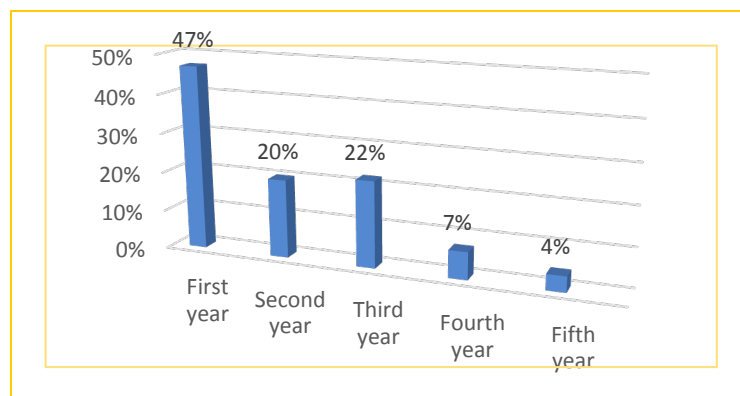
It was also asked if they had already dropped out of school and the answer, in the sample of subjects classified at risk, produced a result of n. 62 units (68%) already out of the school system. This allows us to look with concern at school dropout, also because, when compared with that of the total sample (337 units of which 29% outside the school system) means that two thirds of the "missing" in the school, is part of the subgroup at risk or deviant (Fig. 6). More in detail, of the 99 missing 63%, (over two thirds) is part of the group with dangerous behaviors for themselves and others.

Fig. 6 Percentage of students who interrupted their studies



From the results of the sample, it emerges that the transition years (the first and the third) are the most at risk, with 47% of rejections or interruptions in the first year and 22% in the third year. In professional, technical and artistic schools, the third year usually coincides with a change of address to specialize in their initial choice (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7 Interruptions or failures during high school years



8. Conclusions

In the research conducted, and in accordance with previous work, males represent the subjects most involved in the problem of deviant behavior. So it is vital to motivate and stimulate young people, evaluating together with them the causes that push them to choose as a "better strategy" to leave school forever and never return. The research, in summary, has pointed out that in n. 197 subjects there are some behaviors classifiable as risky (use of substances, dangerous driving, acts of violent bullying verbally and physically, problems with law enforcement, and so on) 75% are moderately at risk while 25% are strongly at risk. The factors influencing this further diversification included the recurrence of such behaviours and the co-existence of more than two behaviours considered at risk (eg use of

alcohol or substances and dangerous driving, or use of alcohol or substances and school hooliganism, etc). As for the age of the subjects at risk, a higher percentage was noted in the range 17-19 years with a 68% (62 units) of presence, followed by a 21% (19 units) with 14-16 years, and finally an 11% with an age from 20 to 22 years. This figure is worrying because the behaviors that are dangerous and in many cases strongly deviant, occur in a very important age group for the development of tomorrow's adults (age 17-19). It also emerged that the practice of early school leaving was implemented by No. 62 units. This result allows us to look with concern at school dropout, also because, when compared with the total sample (337 units of which 29% outside the school system) means that two thirds of the "missing" in the school, is part of the subgroup at risk or deviant. In more detail, of the 99 missing, 63%, more than two-thirds, are part of the group with behaviors dangerous for themselves and others. From the results of the sample, it emerged that the transition years (the first and the third) are the most at risk, with 47% of rejections or interruptions in the first year and 22% in the third year. In professional, technical and artistic schools, the third year usually coincides with a change of address to specialize in their initial choice. In the southern Italian regions, more than in the north, school dropout is strongly related to deviant and criminal activities given the ability to manipulate, recruit and indoctrinate that criminal organizations are able to exercise. The educational model imposed on children in the family environment has been imbued with criminal disvalues since childhood, or is strongly influenced by their influence. For this reason the so-called "criminal familism" constitutes a cultural model of difficult eradication, whose aftermath are capable of inducing violent behavior, to murder, even against members of families who decide to get out of the conditioning imposed by criminal organizations. The task of society in general (but especially of the family and school) is to support the boy in this difficult and troubled period of life because adolescence always needs help from families and institutions, supporting the young man in moments of fall, before it can turn into a free descent with no way back and uncontrolled towards deviance.

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