

Disposition to violence of teenagers with migrant background – possible reasons and strategies for abatement

A lacking sense of belonging or a failed integration of teenagers with migrant background in Germany can become noticeable in different ways, such as withdrawal or isolation. But it becomes most obvious if criminal behaviour is the consequence. In general it can be said that there are some studies that have tried to find out if immigrant teenagers are more prone to violence than their non-immigrant fellows. The results are somewhat unclear and contradictory, but there seems to be some evidence that migrant teenagers are slightly more prone to violence.

There are many possible reasons for emerging criminal behaviour. For instance the phase after the immigration is of particular importance. A sudden change of surroundings and culture which comes along with the immigration into another country can lead to uncertainty and problems of integration in everyday life. Because of linguistic deficits and lack of school education, migrants often reside in bad social circumstances and are hit by unemployment more often than people without a migrant background. These facts might be a reason to be dissatisfied, frustrated and to feel like an outsider.

Another factor which prevents integration and therefore is another possible reason for a teenager's disposition to violence is due to their cultural background. In most instances the cultural standards and moral concepts of the homeland and of the receiving country differ in some ways. This may become a problem if the cultural values of both countries are contradictory. Violence can be the consequence of a clash of cultures, as for example in cases of murder for reasons of honour.

Apart from different values in other cultures, there may exist different views towards appropriate means of child education as well. According to academic studies children whose parents resort to violence – perhaps because of experiences in their own childhood – have themselves violent more often become violent than other children. In addition to that, another possible reason for the disposition to violence is the contact with friends who are violence-prone. Consequently, there is a probability for the teenagers to copy and internalize the brutal behaviour of their friends by and large. Such experiences, gained by family and circle of friends, may result in developing a violence-prone personality.

The most important aspect (which often results from the above-named reasons for the disposition to violence of teenagers with a migrant background) is a lacking sense of belonging, a feeling of homelessness. The reason for emerging aggressions towards the German population is utterly a feeling of being discriminated against because of one's origin, outward appearance or because of linguistic deficits. Thus, an act of violence against the German population may clarify that the teenager does not feel integrated and understood.

Knowing all this, there are some strategies for abatement and prevention. These should – in the future – be conducted to reduce the crime rate of teenagers with a migrant background and to lead to better integration.

If it is possible to work on a non-violent familial education, to improve the educational opportunities of migrants and to convey a feeling of being a respected and equal part of society, this will be a big step towards better integration and therefore towards crime reduction in the future.

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