

# Case study: psychological case of mark spencer

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**Introduction**

The case of Mark Spencer involves the psychosocial dilemma related to peer pressure and the necessary coping mechanisms, family management, and policy ordainment. Evidently, the initial character and status of Mark started in a very commendable atmosphere with emphasis on moral conduct and societal recognition of policies and standards. Initially, the environment of Mark involves a socially coping family, with appropriate supervisions with parents, model figure from his elder brother, and the behavioral modifications through positive reinforcements are being placed to him by the external support systems. In such case, the coping patterns, as well as the Mark's perspective over moral and ethical standards, judgment on right and wrong, and perception of abiding to social standards and policies, are still determined intact. However, as the external factors around Mark Spencer change, the psychosocial coping patterns of Mark begins to alter depending on the situations being implicated to him. The procedures of developmental cycle, such as role and identity confusion versus identified identity, and the stage of adolescent to young adulthood, as afflicted by the changing social factors, particularly the family support systems, peer pressure, and social dilemma, brings forth further personality dilemma in Mark.

In the course of the case presentation, the study shall mainly analyze the psychosocial perspective of Mark's shifting from socially complying behavior to identity confused and defiant behavioral patterns. The study shall relate such social events on physical growth and development, cognitive stages and issues, Erikson's theoretical framework, social and emotional development, and peer, family and school influence.

## **Discussion**

### Physical Growth and Development

The developmental growth of Mark, as presented in the case, initially starts during his 8th grade, wherein his morally complying behavior pattern and socially acceptable coping patterns are very much observed. However, as Mark approaches the age of 16, significant sexual and physical behavioral patterns have been observed, which are associated to physical growth and development. Adolescents continue to have transition periods during, which growth and development occur. Considering the physiological perspective of growth and development, Mark, being 8th grade to 16 years old, has been under the stage of late pubertal predisposition. Growth and development during adolescence represent the culmination of an orderly process that has progressed throughout childhood. Distinguishing it from the prior process, however, are the numerous hormonal changes that occur during this phase of life.

The endocrinologic changes of puberty involve complex interactions of the higher cortical and limbic centers of the brain. These interactions influence hypothalamic function, which in turn regulates the reproductive system via the anterior pituitary gland and the ovaries or testes. One of the inquiries to be considered involves the sexual activity of Mark, which is greatly afflicted by the physiological maturation and bodily changes. Are there any sexual activities, such as keeping and/or utilizing pornographic articles, known incidents of polygamous relationships, etc. that may significantly pose risk on sexual character of Mark? Physical, sexual and psychological development, as well as nutritional requirements, is greatly affected at this

point. At this point, Mark experiences an increased phase of growth and development, which also includes sexual maturation that occurs during adolescence as manifested by the inclination of Mark towards the opposite sex and peer attachments over same gender. The physical changes, specifically hormonal changes, pose the possible rationale for Mark's sexual patterns and behavioral aspects as clearly determined by the endocrinologic changes brought by pubertal events.

### Cognitive Stages and Issues

Utilizing the concept of Piaget's cognitive theory, the analysis can implicate the possible rationale for such behavioral outcomes. The significant cognitive level involved is the stage of formal operations that occur at around 13 years of age onwards, when the individual begins to think less like a child and more like an adult. According to Piaget, the individuals at this point may roughly perform abstract reasoning, although during the initial phase, this may become rigid and more pose traces of self-centeredness. Individuals at this may sometimes confuse ideal with practical but, when confronted with problem, either real or hypothetically, they can suggest number of solutions. As when Mark has been confronted by inquiries of his studies, he then rationalizes a diverting answer to lessen the impact of his parent's inquiry towards his ego. Are there significant abrupt fluctuations in his grade reports or gradual in nature? What are the observed activities that may propose the possible fluctuations of Mark's grade reports? The confusion brought by the external factors, especially if these are contrary to the ideal perspective, may pose the possibility of isolation and diversion to various activities. When Mark encountered the pressures brought by the resisting peers towards his

sports and scouting inclination against the family support system's positive reinforcement for the continuity of his societal rule and policy compliance, Mark experienced a confusion in terms of the ideal and most reinforced activity ending up dropping both activities and resulting to other diversional activity, such as playing computers and games.

### Erikson's Stages

Growth and development's psychosocial dimension consists of feelings and interpersonal relationships. In the case presented, the instituted developmental task as according to the psychosocial theory of Erikson is Industry versus inferiority wherein the prime age criteria sums from age 13 to 16 years of age, which is the case presentation. Mark is currently on his middle adolescent period and is expected to encounter various socially dynamic factors that greatly contribute to his socio-developmental processes. Being in the stage of Industry versus inferiority, the conceptual framework suggests that the individual gains enhancement on his or her craft or hobby upon positive reinforcement brought by the social forces surrounding him/her. Industry from the theory's point of view is initiated if the external supports of the individual harnesses the source of industrial efforts brought by the individual. It is important to consider the following inquiries in order to determine significant changes between the initiation of positive reinforcements: what are the usual activities and behavior performed by Mark during those times without the presence of car and the current, wherein he already use it together with his peers? In the case of Mark, the primary hobbies being centralized is sports and scouting, which

consequently symbolizes the primary craft of Mark; hence, acting as the channel for positive reinforcement in order to boost the ego of Mark.

The primary support system involved in employing positive reinforcement involves the family of Mark, which further encourages the scouting and the sport hobby. Furthermore, the actual results of Mark's inclination with his craft provide him another point source of secondary positive reinforcement, which is his above average grade reports. These two factors mainly contribute to Mark's industrial levels, which consequently motivates him to further improve the status.

However, as he approached the eighth and 9th grade, several changes in his social environment begin to initiate, particularly with his peers. Notably, during the time of Mark's acceleration in scouting and sports, his environment revolves around similarly oriented individuals, who happened to enjoy the same activities as with mark; hence, facilitating positivemotivationin the sports and scouting activities of Mark. However, as he move to the upper levels, the newly obtained peers starts to view the concept of sport and scouting as a boring activity, which produce negative reinforcement and further encourage resistance. Although, Mark's family continues to employ positive reinforcements over sports and scouting, the negation and resistance of mark still receives the priority. Considering that the point of social ordinance of Mark's age is much more inclined to peers rather than family, the perceptions of peers greatly values than those with parents; hence, Mark shifts to the phase of inferiority.

Considering that the parents rationalized the aspect of independence upon the approval of car, it is important to ask how do the parents perceive Mark

obtaining the feeling of independence upon the giving of the car as compared to the evaluations from the latter inquiry? Consequently, Mark negates the craft, which is deemed unapprovingly by peers, and initiates a social isolation wherein he can diversify his interest to another activity that will still provide him points of satisfaction. However, at this point, the tendency of the individual is to perform it in an isolated manner, and as with Mark, playing computer games in his room or watching T. V is the manifestation of the said behavioral inferiority. Continuing further, the social stands of Mark has been uplifted back after acquiring a car, which entails him as the student among his peers who have a car. Such possession restored the social industry of Mark; however, it remained compromise due to the fact that the consideration of peers towards his company is only due to the material possession in the form of the car.

#### Other Social and Emotional Development

Notably, after the institution of car, which symbolizes Mark's point source of intimacy and popularity among his peers, the characteristics of Mark as compared to the initially presented behavior became evidently different in terms of moral compliance. The perspective involved begins to preview peers as far more valuable than the parental and familial support system. Mark begins to manifest defiant behavior that significantly conform him to moral and legal liabilities in the end of the care presentation; furthermore, the schooling reports of Mark significantly dropped. Considering the sudden shift of Mark's enforcement source and preferred associations, are there instances wherein Mark manifests hostile behavior over other individuals other than family? Mark's value towards his friends became evidently

attached, most probably justified by the attachments he obtain from the positive reinforcements instead from activities involving scouting, sports or even lessons, which are viewed negatively by his peer groups.

Conversely, the value of familial attachments over Mark significantly degraded and marked with lesser considerations as manifested by Mark's hostile response to his parent's remarks over him. Moreover, the high temper and irritability of Mark manifest frequently especially if threats toward his usual routines and valuables are threatened even by his family. In such cases, how do the parents perceive the situation deal with Mark in terms of parental interventions in correcting Mark's defiant behavioral patterns? Evidently, the social and moral capacities of Mark became rigid and shadowed by his concerns over peer influence, which markedly decreased his performance over his school, crafts and usual productive activities. Read Marks & Spencer market structure

### Strengths and Weaknesses of Peer Influences

Following Caprara and Zimbardo (1996; cited in Dodge, et. al., 2007 p. 117), the marginally deviant youth who are most susceptible to the influence of deviant peers and are damaged most by placement in highly deviant peer settings. By definition, these youth have begun to try out a behavior pattern that they are not yet committed to a life of deviance, or to a life of social conformity. According to the theory of marginal deviation, the path from marginal deviance to permanent deviance follows the self-fulfilling prophecy, with social-perceptual processes operating in the youth, their peers and outside observers (Dodge, et. al., 2007 p. 117). In the case of Mark, the peer may have both strengths and weakness in terms of the influence they have

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provided to the case subject; however, as stated by the marginal deviance, the defiant behavior conjures not to be permanent but most likely due to try-outs and experiments in order to attain further acceptance to a deviant group. Such rationale poses to be the strength aspect of peer influence wherein Mark already perceives the value of peer as the prime standards to base the moral right and wrong of doing as long as positive reinforcements and acceptance are obtained by him. The presence of such influence overshadows the support systems provided by Mark's family.

On the other hand, the weakness of the peer influence lies in the possibility of increasing the familial attachments over Mark and decreasing gradually his conformity towards his peer groups. The familial aspect is considered as the most probable means of diverting Mark's activity from deviant to socially conforming aspects in the prime source of reinforcements and attention is appropriately provided. How do the parents manage their time with their children in terms of quality time, disciplinary measures, and points of reinforcing the positive behavior of their children? The following activities are essential family building, which requires participation and equal treatment of every member in the family. Considering the fact that the stage of Mark experiences the end of oedipal complex, the importance of paternal influence should greatly be enhanced especially at the point wherein the family time of his father, Doug, is diminished due to additional working hours imposed by his working group.

### Family Context

In terms of the family context, Family relationships affect an adolescent's attitudes, skills, choices, and behaviors concerning alcohol and other drug

use. A social development model suggests that parents who are unskilled or feel helpless in controlling their child's behavior will possibly stop monitoring what that child does. This lack of monitoring may establish fertile ground for problem behavior (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992 cited in Dodge, et. al., 2007 p. 117). Family conflict is strongly associated with higher levels of drug use risk, whereas family cohesion may function as a protective factor (Duncan, Duncan, & Hops, 1994 cited in Dodge, et. al., 2007 p. 118). In the case of Mark, the familial support system may have been present; however, the case did not clearly identify the detailed methodologies and the approach utilized when correcting or dealing with deviant behavior issues. In one scenario, the parent employed the use of forceful removal of one of Mark's diversional activity, television, which resulted to hostile reactions.

How do the parents react and approach Mark in terms of communicating regarding the issues about drugs, alcohol, peers, etc.? In such case, the need for strategic and emphatic approach is essential in order to obtain positive cooperation from the subject. Research suggests that the impact that family members' unhealthy habits have on their children may be minimized if family members engage in communication about use and abuse. Communication is inherent in family systems, family therapy, social learning, and social development approaches. In most family intervention programs, problem-solving skills and communication skills are promoted. Yet communication is often conceptualized and operationalized in terms of style rather than substance.

School Influence

School influences on Mark's personality as demonstrated during the remains as a significant factor in providing positive reinforcement over Mark's Industrial aspect than inferiority. Going back to Mark's initial achievements in school and his participation to various socially complying activities, Mark was able to maintain his above average performance in schools and inclination to scouting and sports considering the fact that positive reinforcement obtained from schools fostered Mark's compliance to maintaining his performance on academe. How does the school of Mark facilitate positive reinforcement strategies on skills and crafts brought by their student? The environment set by the atmosphere of the school and the working groups available in Mark's 7th - 9th grade further encourages the crafts that are acceptable and boosting on Mark's cognitive part; however, as his grade level progress and as he obtained new batch of peers, specifically during his 9th grade, the school environment brought by peer influence shifts to different activities, which consequently dealt negative feedback over Mark's academe status in exchange with positive reinforcement from peers.

#### Conclusion: Summary and Interventions

In the conclusion of the study, Mark Spencer, the primary subject of the case, is subjected mainly to deviations associated to peer influence wherein he obtain attention and positive reinforcements that may or may insufficiently manifested in other support systems. As with the presentation and analysis of his case on different perspectives, the most suggested counseling interventions should involve individual and family therapy. Individual counseling aims to relinquish and channel Spencer inward expressions and feelings in order for him to further realize his current

situation and the possibility for change. Individual counseling should facilitate realization on Spencer's part on a private basis prior to his exposure and discussion with his family. Through this means, Mark should be able to internalize deeply regarding his wants, needs, attentions that he desires, lacking emotional supports and other problems that may have consciously or unconsciously trigger the negative coping patterns. Moreover, the initial approach should facilitate the extraction of Mark's repressed emotional, psychological and social dilemmas that may involve peers, family and other support systems. After which, the family therapy should be initiated in order to determine the possible etiologies that may have caused the problems of Mark. Furthermore, the family therapy should help the family as a whole in strengthening family ties, connections, and the entire system itself for better understanding of each member involved.

#### Reference

Dodge et al, K. A. (2007). *Deviant Peer Influences in Programs for Youth: Problems and Solutions*. Guilford Press.