

Factors Responsible for Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria: A Case Study of Selected Primary Schools in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria

Niyi Adegoke (PhD)

School of Arts and Social Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria
PMB 80067, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

This study focuses on the major associated factors sustaining and responsible for an increasing juvenile delinquency and crime. Three research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Fifty delinquent and fifty non-delinquent juveniles were randomly selected from ten schools across Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria and research questionnaires administered to solicit information. The hypotheses were tested using chi square statistic at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance and appropriate degrees of freedom. Results indicate broken home, poverty and peer influence are the main sustainer of juvenile delinquency. Since poverty appears to be the primary cause of juvenile delinquency it suggested that, the government at all levels should step-up efforts to improve the economy, as a matter of urgency is recommended among others.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency, Crime, Family, Peer Influence, Poverty

1. Introduction

Nearly every society since the dawn of history has looked on youth crime as a serious problem, and our society is no different. The underlining philosophy of Juvenile justice as the history of child welfare in Nigeria became very interesting and of concern for all because it touches, the whole society the government, homes/family and all stake holders. The trend in the study of this problem has moved gradually from the focus on physical and psychological composition of the individual to the influence of the social structure on an individual.

The popular belief that every form of deviant behavior arises from entirely different situation has led to studies like that of Cesare Lombroso who claimed that physical defects such as imbecility, ugliness etc, are crucial in the explanation of delinquency. Psychoanalysts claim that delinquent behavior is an outburst of unsocialized, original animal impulses. Sociologists however claim that deviant behavior as well as normal behavior is a product of the social environment. The social environment which produces this behavior might be primary such as the family and peer group or secondary such as the society. Some studies have tended to focus on the family while other others have focused on the society for the explanation of juvenile delinquency.

Scholars who claimed that family structure is a major factor in the causation of juvenile delinquency worked on the assumption that, if the family background (especially the general atmosphere of the home and the attitude of the other members of the family) is congenial for proper development of a child, it is likely that the child will grow up to be law abiding. On the other hand scholars who claimed that extra family conditions are crucial in the explanation of delinquent behaviour worked on the assumption that participation in the creation and maintenance of delinquent subculture is an important factor in causation of juvenile delinquency. (Olufunmilayo, 1973).

Although the issue of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, it seems that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with that of the present era. The anti-social behaviours often associated with the juvenile delinquents, such vices as vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, truancy, school drop-outs, to mention but a few. Obviously, unless something is done to roll back the wave of juvenile delinquency, the prospect of a better, safer and more prosperous and crime society emerging in Nigeria will remain elusive. (Kudirat et,al 2010).

1.1 Problem Statement

Millions of people worldwide, even in countries once considered relatively safe, seem to have a haunting fear of crime and violence in recent times. The once cherished sense of personal safety appears antiquated and national security is being supplanted by deep anxiety and global terrorism. In its 2008 report about the state of children and crime, UNICEF noted that increasing numbers of young Nigerians are getting involved in criminality. (UNICEF 2008)

The Growing concerns over the increasing juvenile crime rate have sparked extensive research into various factors that may lead young adults to engage in illegal behavior. George (2007) observed that over the past ten years, the number of juvenile courts cases have doubled in West Africa. The rise in destructive acts amongst youths seems to be evident in school dropout rates, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse and quite apparently substantial increase in teenage crimes committed.

In Nigeria today, the fear of crime permeates every aspect of human life. This includes violent crimes such as aggravated robberies, rape, drug abuse, hijacking and bank heists, which are mainly committed by juvenile.

In fact, a careful analysis of the scenario by expert and scholars reveals that the trend is still on the increase. What a delima? It is against this backdrop that this study intends profile the factors responsible for increasing juvenile delinquency in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- A) To examine the role of the family setting in juvenile delinquency
- B) To ascertain the role of poverty in juvenile delinquency
- C) To examine the role of peer influence on juvenile delinquency

The research hypotheses are postulated below:

- 1. Ho: there is no relationship between family setting and juvenile delinquency .
- 2. Ho: there is no significant relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency.
- 3. Ho: there is no significance relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency.

1.1.1 Literature Review

There is no universal definition of a juvenile or delinquency. The laws of different nations stipulate different age brackets for the juveniles. Juvenile delinquency refers to the violation of the criminal codes regulating the behaviour of young persons in the society. Besides, the concept of a juvenile is sometimes used interchangeably with other concepts like a child, an adolescent and a youth. But the law is usually more specific in its definition of a child or juvenile or youth.

The Children and Young Persons Act (hereafter referred to as CYPA) defines a child as “a person under the age of fourteen years”. Also, the law defines a young person as “a person who has attained the age of fourteen years”. The law , however, did not define a juvenile. However other indicators in the law show that the term refers to a person under the age of seventeen years. Juvenile delinquency broadly defined refers to any act in violation of criminal law, committed by a person defined under law as it juvenile, which if had been committed by an adult will be treated as crime or criminal conduct (Alemika 1978; Muncie 1999).

In addition to conducts which constitute delinquency for the juveniles and crime for the adults, there are other behaviours that do not constitute crime for adults but which are defined as delinquency, when manifested by children and young persons. These are referred to as status offences. Such behaviours are prohibited among juveniles because of the status of the young person. Status offences under juvenile delinquency laws of different countries include diverse behaviours like truancy from school, running away from home, drinking alcohol in public, associating with disrepute persons - criminals, prostitutes, etc.

Juveniles are subjected to wider legal restrictions and differential treatment within the criminal justice system. As a result, it has been argued that juvenile delinquency laws are “overbroad, discriminatory and vague”(Scutt 1978).

The vague, discriminatory and overbroad definitions of juvenile delinquency have been variously described as a product of humanitarian motive or repressive intent (Platt 1969; Muncie 1999). No doubt, the vague definition of delinquency leads to wide discretionary and discriminatory powers on the part of law enforcement officers and juvenile justice administrators.

Block and Flynn (1956) argued, that, “not only do legal authorities and so called experts disagree over the definition of delinquent behaviour, they also have serious differences as to where delinquency under the law begins and where it should end

Juvenile delinquency has elicited many images of the child. Delinquency has been variously portrayed and defined as a condition of drift, maladjustment, pathology, disturbance, moral depravity and unruly behaviour. But the definition of juvenile delinquency as well as concern about its manifestation, and control are influenced by a configuration of historical, political, social and economic conditions. According to Muncie (1999:80-81):

What actually constitutes ‘young offending’ is in a constant process of (re) invention and (re) definition. In the early nineteenth century, the juvenile delinquent was created in the midst of wider concerns about unemployment, lack of discipline and moral degeneration. In the early twentieth century the troublesome adolescent was invented in the midst of concerns for ‘boy labour’ street leisure and imperialism. In the mid twentieth century notions of troubled offenders were constructed reflecting the increased presence of welfare agencies and professionals at the time. Social concern may be persistent and recurring but the practices, issues and concepts through which it is articulated are subject to change.

It can therefore be gleaned from the above that there is no clear-cut definition of delinquency. The definition of delinquency and the scope of behaviour covered by the term vary over time and across societies. Delinquency and crime are morally, politically, economically and socially constructed symbols and conditions.

Furthermore, the definition of delinquency and concern about it usually reflect the confusion over such terms like a child, a teenager, an adolescent, a juvenile and a youth. There is also confusion about how to deal with problems of adjustment to the various pressures encountered by children and young persons. The society selectively attributes equal as well as diminished responsibility to young persons in different areas of life,

resulting in confusion over appropriate behaviour expected of young persons.

According to Scranton (1997):...there is the denial of children as rational, responsible persons able to receive information, participate in frank and open discussions and come to well reasoned and appropriately informed decisions about their interpersonal relationship (family, friends, sexual), about school and about developing sexuality. On the other hand, there is the imposition, using the full force of law of the highest level of rationality and responsibility on children and young people who seriously offend. The paradox is that the same sources appear to propose that childhood represents a period of diminished adult responsibility governing certain actions while being a period of equal responsibility governing others. (Quoted in Muncie 1999:40).

1.1.2 Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

Researches indicate that various exposures to violence within the family or outside the family are important sources of delinquencies. In other words, if violence encompasses all emotional environmental aspects of the juvenile's life, he is more likely to engage in delinquent activities (Hagan and Foster 2001). Family behaviours particularly, parental, monitoring and disciplining seem to influence association with delinquent peers throughout the juvenile period (Cashwell and Vacc 1994).

A long history of research has further linked family dysfunction with future criminal offending, in part because parents monitor and provide nurturance to children. It is thought that the loosening of bonds among family members may result in more criminal involvement. In most cases, delinquents have been viewed as individuals who come from less-intact families often referred to as "broken homes".

Typically, the term "broken home" has been operationally defined to mean children residing in single-parent households or any type of household other than a household in which both biological parents are present. In contrast, an "intact family" usually refers to a nuclear family arrangement in which both biological parents reside in the household with their biological children. "Intact family arrangements" differ from other modern day family arrangements including single-parent arrangements, two-parent arrangements involving a step-parent, extended family arrangements, and the adoptive or foster family arrangement (Kierkus and Bauer 2002).

A study by Demuth and Brown (2004), demonstrates that broken homes are associated with juvenile delinquency but also that family arrangements are not just a broken home issue. Specifically, the researchers found that levels of juvenile delinquency were much higher in teenagers residing with single fathers and lowest among teenagers who were part of a two-parent household. The researchers suggest that higher levels of delinquency among children residing with their fathers were due mainly to inadequate parental involvement in a teenager's life. Demuth and Brown drew the inference that overall, the lack of supervision and the absence of close relationships between the teenager and his parents are factors that influence delinquency. Hoffman and Johnson's (1998) findings corroborate Demuth and Brown's (2004), suggesting that were parental supervision and parental bonding lead to delinquency.

1.2 Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Lagos State, South-West Nigeria. The state is one of the hubs of commercial activities. It comprises of people of diverse ethnic groups, cultural and religious afflictions.

The research design employed a survey approach which enables the use of structured questionnaire to extract information from the respondents.

One hundred juveniles comprising of fifty delinquents and fifty non delinquent juvenile were used as the study sample. Delinquent behaviors such as cruelty, bullying, fighting, vandalism, roughness during games, use of foul language, stealing, lying, cheating, examination malpractice, gambling, truancy, drug abuse, noise-making, disobedience, stubbornness, apathy, untidiness, failure to wear correct school uniform, reading of pornographic materials, sexual immorality, mob action, loitering, carrying of weapon and other forms of aggressive behavior were used for the classification of the study, population into delinquent and non delinquent juveniles. Using the above listed criteria five delinquents and five non-delinquents juveniles were randomly selected from ten schools (comprising of both primary and secondary school) across Ikorudu LGA. The study sample was carefully and randomly selected with the assistance of the Class Teachers. Each teacher was carefully briefed on the criteria for the selection, was then asked to select students the meet the criteria. The juveniles chosen by each teacher in a given school were assembled and allotted a tally; thereafter, further randomizations was done mixing the tally together and then selecting five juveniles in each category.

In order to generate the required data for the research, questionnaire was adopted as the research instrument due to its associated benefits such as economy of time, logical presentation of questions and cost effectiveness.

Two types of data were generated. The first is the primary data which was sourced through the use of structured questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. On the order hand, secondary data was obtained from textbooks, magazines, bulletin, journals as well as published and unpublished thesis.

The data generated from the field were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The descriptive statistical analytical tools employed include simple percentage, frequency tables, tally etc. while

Chi-Square was employed to test the validity of the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant.

1.2.1 Testing of Hypothesis

There is no relationship between family setting and juvenile delinquency

Table 1; (Observed Frequency)

Using chi-square =>

$$X^2_c = \sum_{i=1}^r \frac{(foi-fei)^2}{fe_i}$$

fe_i

Where: f_o=observed frequencies F_e=expected frequencies X²_c=calculated value of x²

Expected frequencies=>

$$F_{ij} = \frac{R_{it}C_{jt}}{N}$$

N

Where: R_{it}= row total C_{jt}=column total N=Grand total

F_{ij}=expected frequency

Therefore,

$$F_{11} = C_1R_1/N = (50)(35)/100=17.5$$

$$F_{12} = C_1R_2/N = (50)(65)/100=32.5$$

$$F_{21} = C_2R_1/N = (50)(35)/100=17.5$$

$$F_{22} = C_2R_2/N = (50)(65)/100= 32.5$$

Table2 ; Expected frequency table

$$X^2_c = \frac{(35-17.35)^2}{17.35} + \frac{(15-32.5)^2}{32.5} + \frac{(5-17.5)^2}{17.5} + \frac{(45-32.5)^2}{32.5}$$

$$= 17.5 + 9.42 + 8.93 + 4.81$$

Therefore, x²_c=**40.66** But df= (c-1) (r-)

Where: c=number of column, r=number of row

Thus, df = (2-1) (2-1) =1

From x²-distribution table, the value of x² with 1 degree of freedom at 5percent level of significance is x²_u=**3.841**

Interpretation:

Since x²_c=**40.66**>x²_u=**3.841**, the null hypothesis (H₀): which shows that there is no relationship between family setting and juvenile delinquency is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_i): showing there is significant relationship between family setting and juvenile delinquency is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There is no relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency

Table 3; (Observed Frequency)

Using chi-square =>

$$X^2_c = \sum_{i=1}^r \frac{(foi-fei)^2}{fe_i}$$

fe_i

Where: f_o=observed frequencies F_e=expected frequencies

X²_c=calculated value of x²

Expected frequencies=>

$$F_{ij} = \frac{R_{it}C_{jt}}{N}$$

N

Where: R_{it}= row total C_{jt}=column total N=Grand total F_{ij}=expected frequency

Therefore,

$$F_{11} = C_1R_1/N = (50)(60)/100=30$$

$$F_{12} = C_1R_2/N = (50)(40)/100=20$$

$$F_{21} = C_2R_1/N = (50)(60)/100=30$$

$$F_{22} = C_2R_2/N = (50)(40)/100= 20$$

Table 4; Expected frequency table

$$X^2_c = \frac{(45-30)^2}{30} + \frac{(5-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(15-30)^2}{30} + \frac{(35-20)^2}{20}$$

$$= 7.5 + 11.25 + 7.5 + 11.25$$

Therefore, x²_c=**37.5** But df= (c-1) (r-)

Where: c=number of column, r=number of row Thus, df = (2-1) (2-1) =1

From x²-distribution table, the value of x² with 1 degree of freedom at 5percent level of significance is x²_u=**3.841**

Interpretation

Since x²_c=**40.66**>x²_u=**3.841**, the null hypothesis (H₀): which shows that there is no significant relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency is therefore rejected while the alternative hypothesis H_i: showing there is significant relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency is accepted.

Hypothesis 3

There is no relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency

Table 5: (Observed Frequency)

Using chi-square =>

$$X^2_c = \sum_{i=1}^r \frac{(f_{oi}-f_{ei})^2}{f_{ei}}$$

fe_i

Where: f_o=observed frequencies, F_e=expected frequency, X²_c=calculated value of x² Expected frequencies=> F_{ij}= $\frac{R_{it}C_{jt}}{N}$

N

Where: R_{it}= row total C_{jt}=column total N=Grand total F_{ij}=expected frequency

Therefore,

$$F_{11}=C_1R_1/N = (50)(55)/100=27.5 \quad F_{12}= C_1R_2/N= (50)(45)/100=22.5$$

$$F_{21}=C_2R_1/N= (50)(55)/100=27.5 \quad F_{22}=C_2R_2/N= (50)(45)/100= 22.5$$

Table 6; Expected frequency table

$$X^2_c = \frac{(40-27.5)^2}{27.5} + \frac{(10-22.5)^2}{22.5} + \frac{(15-27.5)^2}{27.5} + \frac{(35-22.5)^2}{22.5}$$

$$= 5.68 + 6.94 + 5.68 + 6.94$$

Therefore, x²_c=**24.24** But df= (c-1) (r-)

Where: c=number of column, r=number of row Thus, df = (2-1) (2-1) =1

From x²-distribution table, the value of x² with 1 degree of freedom at 5percent level of significance is x²_u=**3.841**

Interpretation:

Since x²_c=**24.24**>x²_u=**3.841**, the null hypothesis (H₀) which shows that there is no significance relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_i) : showing there is significance relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency is accepted.

1.3 Findings and Discussion

From the result of hypothesis one, it can be said that broken or unstable homes significantly contributes to juvenile delinquency among other factors. It is a known fact that the family is the foundation of human society and the most important agent of socialization. It is in the family that children are first taught to eschew unacceptable behaviour, to delay gratification and to respect the right of others. Conversely, families can teach children aggressive, anti-social, and violent behaviours. Also, children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflicts, or who are inadequately supervised are at the greatest risk of becoming delinquent. Adolescence is a time of expanding vulnerabilities and opportunities that accompany the widening social and geographical exposure to life beyond the school or family, but it starts with the family.

During the past century, significant changes in family arrangements have occurred, modern family structures vary widely. Its form is diversifying with, for example, the increase in one parent families and non-marital unions as well as extended family arrangements. Differing family structures may directly impact on the stability of the family, home and the functioning of children and adolescents.

The results of this study agree with the summation of Demuth and Brown (2004), Hoffman and Johnson's (1998), Derzon and Lipsey 2000; Wasserman and Seracini 2001 , who summations found that levels of juvenile delinquency were much higher in teenagers residing with single fathers and lowest among teenagers who were part of a two-parent household. The study suggest that higher levels of delinquency among children residing with their fathers were mainly due to inadequate parental involvement in a teenager's life.

The result of hypothesis two indicates that, poverty significantly contributes to juvenile delinquency. This summation is based on various indicators such as poor housing, feeding, and the inability to shoulder financial burden. This result is in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Aderinto and Okunola (1998), where children submitted that they were pushed into street hawking by maintenance needs. Also, Onibokun's (2000) findings that children are forced into delinquency by the need to contribute to family upkeep and lack of relevant education that can guarantee gainful employment after training is further supported by the findings of this research.

Finally, the result of hypothesis shows that, peer influence greatly enhances juvenile delinquency. This finding is supported by Cohen (1977), Hirschi (1969), Haskell (1961) who in their respective summation identified peer influence as one of the factors responsible for juvenile delinquency.

1.4 Conclusion

Nearly all cultures possess a transition phase from childhood into adulthood. As the world is changing, is this the transition into adulthood. Whereas in the past in most industrialized countries, this transition ranged from brief to almost non-existent, it is now a significant part of a person's development. It is now known as adolescence. In

fact the popular term "teenager" was not coined until the 1950s to describe this new group of people living through adolescence. It is believed that this new, drawn-out transition from childhood into adulthood that is common in the western world has left many adolescents in a sort-of limbo where they must seek to define their identity and place in the world, and delinquency may provide a way to do that. This is supported by the fact that crime is committed disproportionately by those aged between fifteen and twenty-five. However, contrary to popular belief it is very rare for teenagers to become spontaneously aggressive, antisocial or violent simply with the onset of adolescence unless certain variables in the child's life are not in order.

In Nigeria today, juvenile delinquency and crime is on the increase posing threats to the safety and security of lives and properties. Under this scenario, scholars are forced question the variables responsible for this ugly trend. Among some of the variables such as the family setting, poverty and peer influence.

1.5 Recommendations

Since poverty appears to be the primary cause of juvenile delinquency, the government at all levels should step-up efforts to improve the economy, as a matter of urgency. This can be done by stemming the tide of unemployment, improving the remuneration of workers, improving infrastructure, creating job opportunities, and empowering the masses in various conceivable ways. This would go a long way to raise the socio-economic condition of most families thus reducing the poverty rate in the country.

The government at all levels should not only provide free basic education but also take practical steps to ensure that the education they give is truly and completely free, qualitative, and necessarily compulsory. Legislating and effecting punitive measures on education stakeholders that default will enhance success in this direction.

It is instructive for school to administrators should step-up efforts to curb every form of truancy and loitering in and around their respective schools so that students may be disciplined to stay put in schools and pay attention to their lessons.

Parents and guardians should not neglect their responsibility to provide for members of their family irrespective of whether they are related by blood or by adoption.

The family as an agent of socialization should be educated on the psychological effect of broken homes on juvenile's behavior.

The role of juvenile justice institutions should be extended and strengthened to monitor juvenile behaviors in schools.

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Table 1. Relationship between family setting and juvenile delinquency (Observed Frequency)

Family Setting	Delinquent	Non- Delinquent	Total
Broken Home	35	5	35
Stable Home	15	45	65
Total	50	50	100

Field survey, 2012

Table 2. Relationship between family setting and juvenile delinquency (Expected Frequency)

Family Setting	Delinquent	Non-Delinquent	Total
Broken Home	17.5	17.5	35
Stable Home	32.5	32.5	65
Total	50	50	100

Table 3. Relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency (Observed Frequency)

Economic Status	Delinquent	Non- Delinquent	Total
Poor	45	15	60
Rich	5	35	40
Total	50	50	100

Table 4. Relationship between poverty and juvenile delinquency (Expected Frequency)

Economic status	Delinquent	Non-Delinquent	Total
Poor Home	30	30	60
Rich home	20	20	40
Total	50	50	100

Table 5. Relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency (Observed Frequency)

Peers	Delinquent	Non- Delinquent	Total
Delinquent Peers	40	15	55
Non-Delinquent	10	35	45
Total	50	50	100

Table 6. Relationship between peer influence and juvenile delinquency (Expected Frequency)

Peers	Delinquent	Non-Delinquent	Total
Delinquent Peers	27.50	27.50	55.00
Non-Delinquent	22.50	22.50	45.00
Total	50.00	50	100.00

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