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Juvenile Delinquency and Academic Achievement: A Look at Secondary School Students in Nigeria

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Abstract
This seminar paper examines the effects of juvenile delinquency on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria. Juvenile delinquency is a growing problem in Nigeria and is characterized by behaviors such as drug abuse, truancy, street violence, and other social vices. These behaviors directly or indirectly impact on the academic performance of students, leading to poor academic outcomes. The paper explains the meaning and overviews of Juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, the paper explores the factors influence juvenile delinquency, effects, way forward and the role of educational psychology. The juvenile delinquency has negative effects on academic performance, reducing learning opportunities and extracurricular activities. The paper presents several useful suggestions to overcome effects or challenges associated with juvenile delinquency such as early intervention programs, alternative education options and strengthening parental involvement. The paper concluded that juvenile delinquency can be effectively reduced through counselling and holistic approach by schools to address both the academic and behavioral needs of at-risk students, ensuring they have the support and resources necessary to overcome challenges and achieve academic success.
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1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency has increasingly become a social menace in Nigeria, and it poses significant threats to the academic achievement of secondary school students. Juvenile delinquency is a broad term that refers to a wide range of behaviors such as drug abuse, truancy, theft, vandalism, and other social vices that violate accepted norms and values in society (Sampson & Laub, 2018). These behaviors may lead to negative consequences, including academic failure, expulsion, and other legal actions (Barnes & Beaver, 2020). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC (2019), Nigeria is among the top five countries with the highest prevalence of cannabis use among youths. The proliferation of hard drugs among adolescents has a direct impact on their academic performance. Research suggests that juvenile delinquency can adversely affect students' academic achievement, as it reduces their interest in learning, attendance, and participation in extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs (Akpama, 2016). The educational sector is critical to the development of any nation, and it is imperative to understand the effects of juvenile delinquency on academic outcomes among secondary school students. Therefore, this seminar paper aims to investigate the effects of juvenile delinquency on the academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. The study will use a literature review approach to examine relevant studies, current trends, and policies that address juvenile delinquency and its impact on academic achievement in the Nigerian context.

Individual grow towards becoming a functional member of the society. In the process of growth he gains empowerment through school learning, stake holders in the industry such as government, missionaries, and proprietors of schools have invested huge sums of money and also provided materials in order to ensure high academic performance of students under their auspices. According to research there has always been diversity in the performance of secondary students, while some students perform very well others do not, and in some cases, students are withdrawn from school for low academic performance. However, various reasons have been attributed to this failure such as; different levels of intelligence, socio-economic factors, school environment, students' attitudes, sex of students, achievement motivation and students' delinquent behaviors. Chambers English Dictionary (1990) stressed that juvenile delinquency is seen to be the omission of duties and crimes committed by young people. A close observation of what is happening in secondary schools will definitely show that juvenile delinquency is a very serious obstacle to students' academic progress., World Youth Report observed that young people who are at the risk of juvenile delinquency often live in different circumstances such

as; parental alcoholism, poverty, breakdown of the family, overcrowding, abusive conditions in the home, death of parents, orphans without the means of subsistence, housing and other basic necessities are at great risk of falling into juvenile delinquency. The researcher in opined that the number of students affected by juvenile delinquency is estimated to have increased from 80 million to 160 million. They stressed that juvenile delinquency in Nigeria do not operate in well organized gangs, but there are instances of assault and vandalism committed by small group of juveniles including looting and other acts of vandalism especially when encouraged during political campaigns and sex offences.

However, in the light of the school system asks for a proper investigation of the good human behavior in order to facilitate teaching and learning for the benefit of the individual, school and the society at large, it is generally the desire of all students' including the ones who perform below average to excel. Though they may not outwardly imply that, but it has been observed that deep down their hearts they desire excellent academic performance. The juvenile delinquency of a learner is a strong force in the learning process that has to be considered. The sphere of juvenile delinquency constitutes one of the predominant factors that may impinge on students' academic performance in secondary schools. This research is based on the effects of juvenile delinquency on the academic performance of secondary impact of Juvenile delinquency on academic achievement of secondary Schools students.

2. Juvenile Delinquency: An Overview

Juvenile delinquency refers to the participation of minors, typically individuals under the age of 18, in illegal activities or behaviors that violate societal norms. These illegal activities can range from petty crimes such as shoplifting to more serious offenses such as drug offenses, vandalism, or violent crimes. Understanding the causes, consequences, and prevention of juvenile delinquency is crucial for developing effective interventions and strategies to address this issue in society. In terms of causes, several factors contribute to juvenile delinquency. One crucial aspect is family dynamics and parental influence. Research has consistently shown that children growing up in dysfunctional families with poor parenting practices, such as neglect, abuse, or inconsistent discipline, are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Barnes & Jacobs, 2013). Similarly, peer influence plays a significant role in shaping the behavior of juveniles. Adolescents who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to engage in criminal activities. Furthermore, individual characteristics and psychological factors contribute to juvenile delinquency. Factors such as low self-esteem, impulsivity, and aggressive behavior increase the likelihood of engaging in delinquent activities. Additionally, socio-economic status is a significant determinant of juvenile delinquency. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more vulnerable to engaging in criminal behaviors due to limited opportunities, poverty-related stressors, and limited access to supportive resources.

The consequences of juvenile delinquency can be divided into short-term and long-term impacts. In the short-term, juveniles involved in delinquent activities may face legal such as probation, detention, or placement in juvenile correctional facilities. These legal consequences may hinder their academic and social development, leading to a lower quality of life in the long term. Moreover, engaging in delinquent behaviors places juveniles at higher risk of continuing their criminal activities into adulthood, reinforcing a cycle of criminal behavior (Loeber & Farrington, 2011). Prevention strategies are essential in tackling juvenile delinquency. Intervention programs that focus on family and the improvement of parenting practices have shown promising results in reducing delinquent behaviors. Initiatives that promote positive school environments, anti-bullying programs, and alternatives to suspension and expulsion have also demonstrated effectiveness in reducing juvenile delinquency.

3. Theoretical Framework

Certainly! When discussing the theoretical frameworks of juvenile delinquency on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria, there are several key perspectives to consider. Some possible theoretical frameworks to explore include:

3.1 Social Learning Theory:

Social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation of others within their social environment. In the context of juvenile delinquency, this theory suggests that exposure to deviant behaviors and criminal models can influence adolescents to engage in delinquent activities. Several studies have supported this theory in understanding the impact of social influences on academic achievement among secondary school students (Bandura, 1977).

3.2 Strain Theory:

Strain theory, formulated by Robert K. Merton, focuses on the strain individuals experience when they are unable to achieve societal goals through legitimate means. According to this theory, adolescents who face strain, such as socioeconomic disadvantage or limited opportunities, are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior as an adaptive response. Research studies have shown a negative association between strain factors and academic achievement among secondary school students (Merton, 1938).

3.3 Social Control Theory:

Control theory, originally developed by Travis Hirschi, suggests that an individual's level of social control or the bonds they have with important social institutions (e.g., family, school) greatly influence their engagement in delinquent acts. Higher levels of social control encourage individuals to conform to societal norms and increase their commitment to academic success, thereby reducing the likelihood of delinquent behavior. Several studies have supported the significance of control theory in predicting academic achievement among secondary school students. Hirschi, (1969).

4. Factors Influencing Juvenile Delinquency

There are various factors that influence juveniles delinquency on academic achievement of secondary Schools students in Nigeria but this symposium focused on the following: Home environment/Family socio-economic status, Peer group influences, School environment and Negative messages from mass media.

i. Home environment/Family socio-economic status

Family socio-economic status is based on family income, parental occupation and societal values in the community. The seeming undependability of our families to curb the menace of juvenile delinquency is not uncommented with the unprecedented global inflation that has had alarming influence on families, resulting in near break down of family ties. This generally shows the negative effect it has on the adolescent member of the family who are mostly found in secondary schools. Family socio-economic status affects parents' ability to send their children to school and also affects students' performance in school According to Uche (2014), children from parent with adequate income, good occupation and high status are likely provided with good quality education from nursery up to university level, given this opportunity, it is possible that such child will be less delinquent than their counterpart from lower socio-economic background. However, Coughin and Vuchimah (2016) in their empirical studies observed that there is a relationship between family socio-economic status and juvenile delinquency.

Dishon and Loeber (2015), also observed that female secondary school students tend to act out as a result of low level of support from their mothers while boys tend to act out as a result of low parental monitoring. Uche (2014) posits that the educational level of parents determines their level and status in the society. This comes from the fact that education has been described as one of the sources of social stratification and social mobility. young people are eight times more likely to take alcohol through initiation of their own family members. In listing the factors underlying juvenile delinquency in secondary schools, Christie (2019) noted that parents and families are significant influence on students' delinquent behavior as family constitute the training ground for aggression. Thus educated parents are less aggressive than less educated parent. broken homes and low educational attainment are the causes of juvenile delinquency.

ii. Peer group influences-

As children enter adolescence, Friends take on a more prominent role in their lives. Steinberg and Silverberg (2016) observed that peer relationships are significant contributor to understanding adolescents development. peer pressure is linked with adolescent girls' decision to become sexually active, and both male and female adolescents' decision to smoke, use of drugs and other anti-social delinquent behaviors. some youths gets into problems due to peer pressure and rebellion against parental authority. One group of peers that plays a role in juveniles' life is gangs. Many juveniles who choose to join gangs lack a support system at home and hope to form bonds and lifelong friends with gang members. Most juveniles are willing to do anything one of the gang leaders asks, including criminal activities.

National Criminal Justice Reference, stressed that gangs are not the only outlet to delinquency that juveniles face through peers. Those who are sent to training schools are also influenced by the juveniles they meet there.

Entering an unknown environment, filled with strangers, is an extremely scary and stressful situation for a juvenile. Naturally, they search for peers there who they can trust and form friendship. Since the types of crimes the juveniles have been sent to the training school for vary, the level of seriousness of each juvenile's offence varies also. However, putting these youths together can backfire because they can learn delinquent behavior from one another. The Criminal Justice Reference further added that as a result of this, a juvenile might leave the training school being more at a risk than he was when placed there. Lipsey and Derzon (2018) opined that for youths under the age of 12-14, a key predictor of variable for delinquency is the presence of anti-social peers. Factors such as peer delinquent behavior, attachment or allegiance to peers, time spent with peers and peer pressure for deviance has all been associated with juvenile delinquency. Spending time with peers who disapprove of delinquent behavior may curb later violence, the influence of peers and their acceptance of delinquent behavior are significant and this relationship is magnified when youths have little interaction with their parents, it has become clear that one of the major ways that juveniles becomes even more delinquent is through unrestricted interaction with deviant peers.

iii. School environment

Elliot (2014), assert that students with delinquent behavior are often grouped together unintentionally in the same classroom as a result of the school, emphasis of nurturing and clustering the academically superior students into same educational tracks. Delinquent gangs and peer groups often emerge under these circumstances when individual feelings of alienation, frustration and anger are naturally reinforced within the classrooms of the academically poor students, the school environment is a major contributor to juvenile delinquency because it is a social interaction that can cause positive or negative strain in the life of youths and also provides the individual with initial reasons to pursue delinquent activities if negative strain or relationship is the result, how school environment contributes to the problem of juvenile delinquency. According to research some teachers have been found to be hostile to the children put under their care. Some have been found not to have interest in teaching as a career, somewhere found not to be attending regularly thereby giving room for students to develop the habit of juvenile delinquency. The youths from low income status are always marginalized as teachers believe that these students have limited potentials and so there is no need working with them. School is a place where children are universally cared for, supported and nurtured; hence marginalization should be discouraged in the school. Mayer (2015) identified school factors as: Lack of involvement in school activities by students, absence of clear rules and school policies to guide students' behavior and few allowance for individual difference in the school. when the academic curriculum models and instruction do not match the students' ability level, he/she may become frustrated or bored and less attached to the school altogether, the quality of school that a child attends may determine the likelihood of him associating with delinquent peers.

iv. Negative Messages from Mass Media

The influence of the media on the psychosocial behavior of the juveniles is profound, as a result, some research findings proved that excessive television watching have a deleterious effect on learning and academic performance of students. According to Flannery (2017), media portrayals of violence have been well established as a risk factor causing juvenile delinquency. The media has a very high tendency of influencing juveniles negatively into delinquent behaviors, high levels of exposure to violence on television have been found as a factor contributing to juvenile delinquency. Kauffman (2011) state that extensive television viewing regardless of content has been found to negatively affect juvenile behavior leading to low level of academic performance of student. More so, video and computer games that triggers impulsive and reflexive responses among juveniles that in effect contribute to the development of a tolerance for juvenile delinquency, if not to strain juveniles' on how to be delinquent .It stressed that juvenile delinquency is one of the most visible forms of behavioral problems in human society. According to them, world news paper and broadcast media reports daily on the extent of juvenile delinquency among students.

Juvenile delinquency deeply harms not only its victims but also their families, friends and society. Its effects are seen not only in deaths, illness and disability, but also in terms of quality of life. The effects of mass media on juveniles' academic performance have become very significant not only because of its communicability but also as a result of its negative impact on juvenile delinquency.

5. Effects of Juveniles Delinquency on Students

Juvenile delinquency can have detrimental effects on students. Below are some key effects:-

i. Academic performance: Juvenile delinquency can negatively impact a student's academic performance. Research suggests that delinquency is associated with lower grades, higher rates of school dropout, and reduced educational attainment (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Murray & Farrington, 2010).

ii. Emotional well-being: Delinquent behavior can lead to emotional distress and psychological problems among students. These may include increased levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2002; Steinberg, 2008).

iii. Substance abuse: Juvenile delinquency is often linked to substance abuse, with delinquent youth being at higher risk for engaging in drug and alcohol use. Substance abuse can further hinder academic performance and have long-lasting negative effects on a student's overall well-being (McCord, 2003; Windle & Windle, 2011).

iv. Peer relationships: Delinquency can impact peer relationships, both in terms of negative peer influence and limited positive social connections. Students involved in delinquency may align with delinquent peers, leading to further risk-taking behaviors and academic distractions (Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991; Haynie & Osgood, 2005).

v. Legal consequences: Students involved in delinquency may face legal repercussions, including arrests, court appearances, and possible placements in correctional institutions. These legal troubles can disrupt education, create stigma, and hinder opportunities for future academic and career success (Farrington, 2003; Sweeten, Piquero, & Steinberg, 2013).

6. The Role of Educational Psychology Towards Juveniles Delinquency

The role of educational psychology in addressing juvenile delinquency is significant as it focuses on understanding the cognitive, emotional, and social factors that contribute to delinquent behaviors, and aims to intervene and prevent such behaviors through educational strategies. There are various ways that educational psychology can effectively address and mitigate juvenile delinquency:

i. **Identifying and addressing learning difficulties:** Educational psychologists play a critical role in identifying learning difficulties and disabilities, which can contribute to feelings of frustration, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems in juveniles. By identifying and addressing these difficulties early on, educational psychologists can provide appropriate interventions and support to improve educational outcomes and reduce the likelihood of delinquent behaviors (Harrison, & Thomas, 2009).

ii. **Promoting positive school climate and engagement:** Educational psychologists work to create positive school environments that foster engagement, connectedness, and a sense of belonging among students. Research has consistently shown that positive school climates, characterized by supportive relationships, clear expectations, and opportunities for meaningful engagement, can reduce the likelihood of involvement in delinquent behaviors.

iii. **Developing social-emotional skills:** Educational psychologists focus on promoting the development of social and emotional skills in juvenile populations. These skills include self-regulation, empathy, problem-solving, and decision-making, which are crucial for interpersonal relationships and managing emotions effectively. Teaching these skills can reduce aggression, violence, and other delinquent behaviors by equipping students with alternative strategies to handle conflicts and challenges.

iv. **Implementing evidence-based interventions:** Educational psychologists utilize evidence-based interventions within the school setting to prevent and address delinquency-related behaviors. These interventions may include social skills training, anger management programs, restorative justice practices, or mentoring programs that aim to enhance pro-social behaviors and reduce antisocial tendencies.

By incorporating these strategies within educational settings, educational psychologists can contribute to reducing juvenile delinquency rates and promoting positive developmental outcomes for youth.

7. Suggestions

Addressing the effects of juvenile delinquency on students requires a multi-faceted approach that involves both prevention and intervention strategies. Below are some ways forward.

i. **Prevention programs:** Implementing prevention programs that target at-risk youth and their families can help prevent delinquent behavior and improve academic outcomes. Examples of effective prevention programs include school-based interventions, mentoring, family counseling, and community outreach.

ii. **Early intervention:** Early identification and intervention of delinquent behavior is critical to prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system. Interventions should be tailored to address the specific needs of the student and their family, and focus on promoting positive behavior and providing support for academic success.

iii. **Collaborate with local law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies:** Developing partnerships with local law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies can help schools address delinquency issues more effectively. This collaboration can involve sharing information, coordinating interventions, and providing support to students who are transitioning between the school system and the juvenile justice system.

iv. **Supportive environments:** Creating safe and supportive school environments that promote positive behavior and academic success can help prevent delinquency and improve outcomes for students. This includes creating strong relationships between students and adults, addressing bullying and other forms of aggressive behavior, and providing academic, social, and emotional support.

v. **Restorative justice practices**: Restorative justice practices can be used to address delinquent behavior and promote healing and reconciliation between offenders, victims, and their communities. These practices focus on repairing harm, building relationships, and promoting responsibility and accountability.

vi. **Increase access to mental health resources:** Many delinquency issues can be linked to underlying mental health problems. Schools should invest in mental health resources, including counseling services, to help students address and manage their emotional and behavioral challenges.

vii. **Individualize support for at-risk students:** Each student has unique circumstances, and using a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective in addressing delinquency and its impact on academic achievement. Schools should consider developing individualized support plans for at-risk students, taking into account their specific needs and challenges.

viii. **Promote conflict resolution and social-emotional learning:** Teaching students conflict resolution skills and promoting social-emotional learning can reduce the likelihood of delinquency. Schools can incorporate these components into their curricula and provide workshops or training sessions for students to develop these skills.

ix. **Enhance coordination between schools and community organizations:** Collaboration between schools and community organizations plays a crucial role in tackling delinquency and improving academic achievement. Schools should work closely with community organizations that offer after-school programs, mentorship opportunities, and other resources that can support students in developing positive behaviors and achieving academic success.

x. **Provide ongoing support and monitoring:** Maintaining ongoing support and monitoring of at-risk students is crucial. Schools should establish systems to track the progress of at-risk students, provide ongoing support, and intervene promptly if signs of delinquency emerge.

8. Conclusion

Juvenile delinquency can have a significant impact on the academic achievement of secondary school students. Students who engage in delinquent behaviors are more likely to experience lower grades, higher dropout rates, and reduced educational attainment. However, by implementing preventive measures, providing alternative education options, involving parents, fostering a positive school environment, increasing access to mental health resources, collaborating with local law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies, individualizing support, promoting conflict resolution and social-emotional learning, enhancing coordination with community organizations, and providing ongoing support and monitoring, schools can mitigate the negative effects of delinquency and help students succeed academically. It is crucial for schools to take a holistic approach to address both the academic and behavioral needs of at-risk students, ensuring they have the support and resources necessary to overcome challenges and achieve academic success.

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