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The Predisposing Factors and Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency to Adult Criminality Transition In Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency is a growing phenomenon that is of global concern. The menace of juvenile delinquency is becoming perpetual leading to reactions from societies across the world. Thus, this study analyses predisposing factors and control of juvenile delinquency in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau state, Nigeria. A cross-sectional design was used and a total of two hundred (207) adolescents and parents were used as sample for the study. This sample size was drawn from secondary schools and households through cluster and stratified random sampling. Two (2) research questions were raised. A questionnaire was designed and validated by experts in the field of criminology and security studies in University of Jos. The choice of these process and procedure is because it is suitable for a relatively large sample size and generalization. The study equally adopted qualitative methods in order to triangulate the findings. Thus, an in-depth interview was conducted with seven (7) interviewee purposively selected from households, vigilante group and schools. They were selected because they were knowledgeable on the subject matter. The study was guided by structural functionalist perspective. The findings from the study revealed that there is a high rate of juvenile delinquency in the study and the predisposing factors are family background and peer group influence. The study recommended a statutory frame work for effective coordination of all partners and stakeholders in the area of juvenile delinquency for effective prevention of juvenile delinquency to adult criminality transition.

Key Words: *Juvenile, Delinquency, Juvenile delinquency, Predisposing Factors, Adult Criminality*

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency has become a major challenge in an increasing complex and complicated global society. For example, in the United States, in 2007, law enforcement agencies reported 2.18 million arrests of juvenile delinquents under age 18 (Curt Alfrey, 2009). Across Indian states, about 33,000 juveniles, mostly between the age group of 16 to 18, have been arrested for various crimes such as rape and murder in 2011 (Sahmey, 2013). Presently, involvement of young people in delinquent and criminal behaviour is on the increase as they negotiate transition from childhood to adulthood (Osagie-Obazee&Eduwen2016), and it has been observed that groups such as family, peers and close friends exert the greatest influence on them (the adolescent) (Tiller, 2000).

The history of juvenile delinquency could be traced to Elizabeth's "poor law" of 17th century (Ali, Rahim & Alamgir, 2018, p. 1087). The poor law held that parents should take care of their children and socialize them to prevent them from becoming delinquent as children are not themselves answerable for their actions (Shoemaker 2013 cited in Ali, Rahim & Alamgir, 2018). This was, apparently, with the view to preventing children from becoming delinquents thereby enabling a transition (not to adult criminality but) to a responsible adulthood. Presently, most serious countries of the world have different programmes and strategies for preventing juvenile delinquency to adult criminality transition.

According to Onyehalu (2003), any departure from acceptable norms by people who are not yet adult is delinquency. It is in line with this conception that Juvenile delinquency can be referred to a behaviour of young people that contravenes normative values and expectations of the society. The predisposing factors of delinquency could be family background and peer group pressure. When the juvenile delinquents transit into adult criminals, the critical challenges are the threat to security of life and properties in the country.

Curt Alfrey (2009) posits that delinquent behaviours that young people are engaged in are classified into two types of offences. These are criminal and status offences. The status offences are minor offences ranging from stealing in

cooking pots, truancy, defecating and urinating at prohibited places to robbing parents, peers and mates of their foods and play items. If the behaviour is not proactively checked it soon aggravates, degenerates and slides into more serious offences which are criminal in nature. These offences may range from vandalism to stealing, drug abuse and even organized and violent crimes.

Suffice it to say that the basic crimes committed by young people are stealing, smuggling, drug abuse and other violent crimes. Therefore, the rate at which children and young persons are getting involved in criminal activities in Nigeria is seemingly increasing and poses a great threat to the security and harmony of the society.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Presently, the traditional patterns guiding the relationships and transitions among family, schools and work are being confronted. Precursory analysis reveals that social relations that ought to project and encouraged unfettered as well as unhindered socialization and transition to responsible adulthood process are degenerating. Hence, life's trajectory is becoming more complex, confused and unpredictable. Many children are becoming more delinquent and transiting to adult criminals.

The problem of juvenile delinquency, to reiterate, is a more complex, confusing, complicated, and it is a universal, issue. Hence, crime prevention programs appear either unequipped to deal with the present realities or scarcely exist. Developed countries are engaged in activities aimed at juvenile crime prevention, but the activities in Nigeria society are often inadequate to address the existing situation. Nigeria is experiencing various challenges ranging from social, political and economic with most families mostly affected. As a result, young people are committing offences ranging from truancy, stealing from peers and cooking pots to theft, vandalism, drug abuse robbery and other violent crimes with the potentials of graduating into adulthood criminality.

Both (print and electronic) media are awashed with news of gang rape, clash between gangs of delinquents, "sarasuka" boys, cult groups amongst others. This doubtlessly constitutes a devastating problem to Jos North Local Government Area (LGA), Plateau State and Nigeria at large. It is the increasing rate of children and young person's getting involved in criminal activities in Jos and Nigeria society that poses a great threat to the security and harmony of the society. Hence, this study seeks to analyse the predisposing factors and prevention of juvenile delinquency in Jos North LGA and beyond.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the predisposing factors underlying juvenile delinquency in Jos North Local Government Area.
2. To identify society's response to address the menace of juvenile delinquency in Jos North LGA.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted in Jos North Local government Area of Plateau State on predisposing factors and prevention of juvenile delinquency. The construct may have several dimensions but this study is concerned with the predisposing factors such as family background and peer group influence, as well as measures taken by authorities to prevent juvenile delinquency and transition to adult criminality. These factors include family background, peer group influence and media.

Literature Review

Predisposing Factors Underlying Juvenile Delinquency

Few decades ago, studies on child development and that of delinquent behavior has shown that individual, social and community conditions as well as their interactions influence behavior. Behavior is a consequence of interaction of several factors some of which include poor family background and negative peer influence.

The family, as a primary agent of socialization, is responsible for discovering and shaping the personality and/or character development of every child in society. Hence, the personality and/or character of child will scarcely be shaped by members from poor family background. To corroborate this, Prince & Kunz (2013) carried out a quantitative research a research of one thousand five hundred stakeholders from selected states in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria that the effects of family structure on juvenile delinquency is an important factor in explaining delinquency among young people. Family disintegration, and fragmentation, is one of the predisposing factors of juvenile delinquency. A study by Oyafunke-Omoniyi (2014) reveals that, families that disintegrate into divorce exhibit a high incidence of delinquency more than families that remain united. Even a nuclear family with many children influences juvenile delinquency that can transit to adulthood criminality. The family structure of the juvenile delinquents studied in Punjab, India by Ranga (2021) reveals that 160 (80%) juvenile delinquents are from fragmented nuclear family. It is within this context that researches have indicated relationship between juvenile delinquency and parents' income, education amongst others.

Accordingly, the socio-economic status of parents is a factor that influences juvenile delinquency. The findings of the research of Sahmey (2013) in Government Observation Home of Rourkela Sub Jail, Odisha, India reveals that 52% of the parents of juvenile delinquents were daily wage laborers and around 28% were engaged in agriculture and other

meager occupations which means they are from poor socio-economic background. This is because 90% of the parents of the juveniles were found to be illiterate, whereas only 10% of the parents were literate. This is instability in family income. To put it more succinctly, in a study carried out by Akhter, Sabeen, Nadeen & Khan (2015) in Faisalabad and Bahawalpur districts of Punjab province, large majority i.e. 65.0% of the respondents had Rs. 5001-15000 monthly family income, 30.0% of them had Rs. 15001- 30000 and remaining 5.0% of them had above Rs. 30000 monthly family income. Similarly, the results of quantitative research conducted by Diamond and Joy (2017) in Asari-Toru L.G.A of Rivers State reveals that low socio-economic status homes influence deviant behaviour most with 61.99 (SD = 7.20). Hence, the finding of the study by Ranga (2021) Punjab, India reveals the percentage of child crimes committed by children aged 15 to 18 years was found to be more than two thirds (71%). The quality of child-parent relationship and where there is poor relationship due to lack of education, unstable income the tendency of the children becoming delinquent is almost automatic, and they are the potential population of the adulthood criminals.

Equally, many researches have shown that peer group influence is another predisposing factor to juvenile delinquency that requires intervention to prevent the dreaded challenge before graduating to adult criminality. In a study carried out by Sahmey (2013) in Government Observation Home of Rourkela Sub Jail, Odisha, India reveals that 66% of juveniles are delinquent due to peer influence as against 34%. Equally, a study was carried out by Akhter, Sabeen, Nadeen and Khan (2015) in Faisalabad and Bahawalpur districts of Punjab province the association between peer group and juvenile delinquency. Chi-square (= 31.02) value shows a highly-significant association between peer group and the juvenile delinquency. Gamma (604) value shows a strong positive relationship between the variables. More recently, in Pearson's correlation analysis between peer influence and juvenile delinquency (n=170) conducted by Yusuf et al (2021), the result indicates a negative and significant correlation $r = -.161$; $p < .036$ between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among adolescents, hence implying that peer pressure encourages delinquent behaviour among adolescents of the effect of college roommate drinking on nondrinkers, indicates a large reinforcing peer effect. Suffice to say that negative peer group influences juvenile delinquency.

Responses to Juvenile Delinquency

The response of communities to juvenile delinquency had been communal in nature. This is owing to the fact that a child was regarded as communally owned predominantly in pre-colonial era. However, with current civilization, that notion is almost outmoded. Currently, to respond to juvenile delinquency, the society is concerned with increasing the participation of individual citizens, small groups and non-state security organizations in activities designed to reduce juvenile delinquency and potential transition to adult criminality as well as to improve the quality of life of their neighborhood life, just as in pre-colonial Nigeria when societies had institutional ways of dealing with security challenges (Suchi, 2022). This is due to the fact that a centralized policing arrangement is scarcely producing the objective of crime prevention. Presently, society responds to juvenile delinquency by non-state security organizations, mostly operating under the mandate of communal consensus to fight juvenile delinquency, as volunteers. Thus, the study conducted by Deme, Luke and Asaju (2020, p. 73) indicates that an interviewee reveals that the security arrangement "in our community is effectively good, they are serving as local police..." They are playing a dual role of disciplinary organization and security personnel and are effectively strong and well organized. This is the effort of communities in an attempt to support poor background families in prevention of juvenile delinquency and transition to adult criminality.

In Nigeria, there are statutory Juvenile correctional institutions such as juvenile courts, borstal centers, approved schools and remand homes for treatment and reintegration. These institutions have not functioned adequately to aid the control and prevention of juvenile delinquency and transition to adult criminality. To corroborate this, a study conducted by the Nigeria office of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2017 found that remand homes, approved schools, borstals or reform homes are not equipped to serve their statutory functions. Official figures show that more than 40,000 people held in 147 prisons and borstals across the country, over 60 percent are awaiting trial. Prison sources contend that between 10 and 20 percent of these are children less than 18 years. This implies that the stated objective of rehabilitation is defeated. Hence, prevention of juvenile delinquency becomes more complicated, confused and complex when delinquents are not reintegrated into the society on discharge or graduation.

THEORETICAL REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

It is difficult to find one theoretical propositions that will adequately address family background and peer group influence and prevention of juvenile delinquency to adult criminality transition. Hence, the study reviews social control and differential theories before anchoring the work on structural functionalist perspective.

Social Control Theory

Hirschi (1969) identified four key concepts in his social control theory. These include attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. The theory holds that juvenile delinquency occurs when there is no or weak bond between a child and social groups. According to Miller (2009), criminal behaviour and delinquency result from failure of individuals to bond with conventional social groups such as the family and schools (Miller, 2009). It is this lack of bond largely due to poor family background that serves as breeding ground for juvenile delinquency.

Differential Association Theory

According to Sutherland (1947), criminal behavior is learned in the same way as law-abiding values are learned, and that, this learning activity is accomplished, in interactions with others, through a process of communication within intimate groups. He argues that, just as one can be socialized into good behavior, so also can one be socialized into bad behavior. Most of delinquent children, because of lack of social bond, they are exposed to negative peer group influence which leads to juvenile delinquency. The potentiality for adult criminality is seen when the juvenile learns the techniques for committing crime.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The work is guided by structural functionalist perspective. The perspective originates from organismic analogy of society with parts (sub-systems), and these parts function independently and inter-relatedly for the maintenance and sustenance of the system as a whole. It is the consensus of values between and amongst the family and other organisations that makes integration and continuity possible (Madaki, 2020). According to one of the proponents of this school, Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) holds that consensus on common values was the integrating force in social life and served as the engine of goal realization. It is in view of this that Charon (1992) views Structural Functionalism as a sociological theory that depicts society as a social system consisting of various structures, organizations and institutions, influencing each other and affecting the whole system. Hence, any attempt to prevent delinquency to criminality transition has to focus on coordination of all stake holders such as the families, schools, state and non-state institutions and agencies, and consensus on common value as the integrating force.

Methodology

The quantitative and qualitative designs are adopted for this study. A cross-sectional design was used and a total of two hundred (207) adolescents and parents were used as sample for the study. This sample size was drawn from secondary schools and households through cluster and stratified random sampling. Two (2) research questions were raised. A questionnaire was designed and validated by experts in the field of criminology and security studies in University of Jos. The choice of these process and procedure is because it is suitable for a relatively large sample size and generalization. The study equally adopted qualitative methods in order to triangulate the findings. Thus, an in-depth interview was conducted with seven (7) interviewee purposively selected from households, vigilante group and schools. They were selected because they were knowledgeable on the subject matter.

Findings and Discussions

Predisposing Factors of Juvenile Delinquency

Table 1: Respondents' views on the poor family background as predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	136	65.7
No	49	23.7
Don't Know	22	10.6
Total	207	100

Table 1 indicates that family background accounts for majority 136 (54%) of the predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency in the study area. This is followed by 49 (23.7) who do not think poor family background is a predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency. Only 22 (10.6%) indicate imply that there other predisposing factors rather than the poor family background. The findings show that poor family background (54%) is predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency. This is consistent with the study in Punjab, India by Ranga (2021) reveals that 160 (80%) juvenile delinquents are from fragmented nuclear family.

Table 2: Respondents' views on peer group influence as predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	113	54.6
No	67	32.4
Indifferent	27	13
Total	207	100

Table 2 equally indicates that Peer group influence a greater 113 (37%) predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency in Jos North Local Government Area. 67 (32.4%) respondents indicated that peer group influence is not a predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency. 27(13%) respondents remain indifferent. This denotes that juvenile delinquency can be caused by a variety of factors. The findings reveals that Peer group influence is a major 113 (37%) predisposing factor of juvenile delinquency. This is in tandem with the study of Yusuf et al (2021). The result indicates a negative and significant correlation $r = -.161$; $p < .036$ between peer influence and juvenile delinquency among adolescents, hence implying that peer pressure encourages delinquent behavior.

Table 3: Respondents' views on society's response to prevent juvenile delinquency

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vigilante groups	94	49
Community Policing	47	25
Probation	42	22
Others	8	4
Total	191	100

The table (table 3) indicates that the majority 94 (49%) of the respondents believe that vigilante group are the organisation that respond to prevent juvenile delinquency in Jos North Local Government. This is followed by community policing 47(25%), probation 42(22%) and others preventive measures 8(4%) respectively. This means that police alone cannot prevent juvenile delinquency. The findings show that vigilante group is the organisation that responds to prevent juvenile delinquency. This is in tandem with the study of Deme, Luke and Asaju (2020, p. 73) which interviewee reveals that “the vigilante in our community is effectively good, they are serving as local police... they are serving as disciplinary organization and security personnel. The vigilante is effectively strong and well organized.”

Table 4: Respondents' views on the response of law enforcement agencies to juvenile delinquency

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Effective	23	12
Very effective	24	13
Ineffective	96	50
Very ineffective	48	25
Total	191	100

The table 4 indicates that the views of the respondents regarding the response of law enforcement agencies to juvenile delinquency are largely ineffective. This is represented by 50% respondents. Only 12% and 13% respondents represented effective and very effective respectively. This is in line with what is obtained in the literature regarding the effectiveness of formal agent of social control in controlling and preventing juvenile delinquency in Nigeria in general and in the study area particularly. It is line with this that must of the communities and families are resorting to non-state arrangements for prevention of juvenile delinquency.

The Coordination and Collaboration of Groups and/or Organisations for Effective Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency to Adult Criminal Delinquency Transition

When a question was asked as to whether or not some form of coordination and collaboration has ever existed between and amongst the organisations for prevention of juvenile delinquency. A respondent reveals that “parents used to bring delinquent children to them for disciplining and they also used to take the stubborn delinquent children to the police”. In another interview, head of house hold reveals that we used to take our children to the office of vigilante group. “Sometimes the children fear the vigilante more than we the parents. They use to teach them some lessons of their lives. He added that we thank the vigilante “don yarobanamutum day aba aisunataya mu tarbiyar da su” which is interpreted as a child is not for one person, they assist us in meting discipline on them. Another respondent reveals that “we often report students who are very wayward to the parents in order for both the parents and the school authority to put heads together to inculcate morals in the student.

Therefore, juvenile delinquency has become a phenomenon in Jos North, Nigeria and beyond. It has continued to pose a threat to the mutual peaceful co-existence in society, hence, breeding more criminals among the young people. Hence, the society devises means to curtail and check the activities since the formal police arrangement appear inadequate. The response of the society has been quite profound as found in the study. However, it remains substantially inadequate in tackling the problem of juvenile delinquency. This is owing to the fact that parental involvement remains significantly low when compared to the magnitude of the problem due to lack of resources. Also, the absence of statutory framework for the coordination and the collaboration of all stake holders and partners have led to piecemeal approach to curbing the menace of juvenile delinquency. As a result, the children are exposed to all kinds of influence and later become adult criminals.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study raises the question of the poor family background as a predisposing factor for juvenile delinquency. The study is able to reveal that persistence of juvenile delinquency is due to poor family background. The challenge revolves around lack of human and material resources to cater for the family. Dysfunctional families, lack of family attachment and supervision have led many children into quagmire of juvenile delinquency that can scarcely be reversed. Hence, we recommend equitable redistribution of societal resources and provision of enabling environment for every member to thrive irrespective of socioeconomic background.

The study also examines peer group influence as predisposing factors of juvenile delinquency. The study is able to indicate that peer group influence causes juvenile delinquency. This is, however, not the only predisposing factor. Hence,

peer group influence is an important factor in the behavior of young persons under 17 years. Therefore, we recommend that the family as the hub of human society and the most important agent of socialization should elicit utmost attention. This is to enable parents at the familial level must have command and control over the behavior of their children. The strong attachment inevitably increases the possibility for positive outcomes and protection of young persons from involving in juvenile acts.

The study equally raised the concern about response of society to address the rate of juvenile delinquency. The study is able to reveal that society has been quite profound and remains substantially inadequate in tackling the problem of juvenile delinquency. Vigilante groups, families, schools, police and other institutions have tried their best in prevention of juvenile delinquency to adult criminality but the involvement has not yield significantly results. Sending children to remand homes has proven to be ineffective in controlling the rate of juvenile delinquency. This is largely due to institutional problems associated with policies, programs, funding and operation of the rehabilitation facilities in the institution. Therefore, we recommend a multi-dimensional approach which will take into account the family, community environment and the governmental agency. The rejigging of the institutions and the creation of enabling environments to reflect the reality of the 21st century are prerequisites.

Most importantly, the study raises the issue of coordination and collaboration of the various groups and/or organisations prevention of juvenile delinquency to adult criminality. The study is able to discover that some form of coordination between certain groups has existed and yielded some results. Hence, we recommend that there has to be a statutory framework that will ensure the coordination and collaboration of the all stakeholders and partners in the business of prevention of juvenile delinquency to adult criminality. This will assist the future generation to be responsible, aid the reintegration of those in remand and boardal homes on discharge and engagement of young people to be useful to themselves and society.

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