

DISTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A STUDY OF BORSTAL HOME GANMO, ILORIN

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Abstract

Delinquent and criminal behaviour may abound among young people, as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and confusing world. Therefore, the study examined distal factors influencing juvenile delinquency: a study of Borstal Home Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara. The objectives of the study is to establish whether accommodation, neighbourhood environment, criminal and psychiatric problems family financial problem will influence juvenile delinquency among juvenile delinquent in Borstal Home, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State. Descriptive research of the correlational type was adopted for the study. The study population comprised all 191 juvenile delinquents of Borstal Home Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select one hundred and eighty one respondents for the study. A researcher-structured questionnaire validated by three experts in sociology and community development was the instrument used to collect data. The reliability of the instrument was established through split-half method and a co-efficient of 0.71 was obtained using Spearman Brown Formula. Inferential statistics of Multiple Regression was used to test the hypothesis formulated @ 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that negative neighborhood environment; poor accommodation; limited criminal and psychiatric problems; limited family financial problem have significant influence on juvenile delinquency. It implies that these distal factors negatively influenced delinquent behaviours the children/adolescents. The study therefore, recommended among others that the government should implement community development programmes aimed at improving the physical and social infrastructure of disadvantage neighborhoods. There should be increase in the provision of social services in neighborhoods with poor accommodations and negative environment. This includes expanding

access to mental health services, mentorship programmes and after-school activities that engage youth in positive social network.

Keywords: Juvenile, delinquent, distal factors, family, financial problem

Introduction

Deviance is unavoidable in any human civilization where social norms are established, and it has always posed a danger to the peace and quiet that community members enjoy. According to Bergin and Bergin (2012), juvenile delinquency is the term used to describe the engagement of teens in illegal behavior who are typically under the age of 18 and conduct an act that would be deemed a crime. When a youngster does anything that is illegal and not socially acceptable, that child is labeled as a delinquent. Accordingly, someone who has not reached the age of eighteen and who breaks the law or commits an offense before reaching the legal age of maturity is referred to as a "juvenile" or "child" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

In addition to the slow moral degradation that offenders may experience when they get enraged by deviance and crime, a nation grappling with the problem of crime must bear significant costs related to custody, health, and the economy (Simões & Matos, 2008). Due to the overwhelming evidence that, in the absence of proper care, juvenile offenders may grow up to commit crimes, juvenile delinquency has therefore emerged as a significant societal issue that every country is working to address (Henry et al., 2012). The young offenders are absolved of their guilt for their offense due to their infancy and to avoid negative labels; as a result, they are not treated like adults. Juvenile delinquency has grown in importance over time as a result of its detrimental effects, and scholars from various fields as well as policy makers are grappling with it (Young et al., 2017).

Since the dawn of human civilization, crime which is defined as breaking the law by a specific act, omission, or neglect that may be punished has been a major issue. Although children are innocent at birth, they might develop into delinquents as a result of unhealthful living conditions, disregard for fundamental needs, and inappropriate peer pressure. As young people navigate the shift from childhood to adulthood in a world that is becoming more complicated and confused, delinquent and criminal

behavior may be commonplace (Abikoye & Adetifa, 2011). A kid is a member of the society in which he lives, and the social networks that facilitate a well-organized socialization process are disintegrating. For many young people these days, the conventional patterns of connections that used to guide transitions between the home, school, and job are disintegrating. The modern lifestyle is less regimented and more diversified. Many young people nowadays, irrespective of gender or social background, face personal hazards. Young people frequently take advantage of these alluring chances, committing crimes like drug addiction and utilizing violence against their classmates (Abdullahi, 2009). Antisocial attitudes, values, and beliefs, dysfunctional parenting, low academic and professional accomplishment, and antisocial peer associations are a few of the proximal variables. Research suggests that there is a positive correlation between anti-social attitudes, values, and beliefs and a rise in adolescent delinquency (Abiola, 2001; Balogun, 2006). According to Balogun (2006), there is a greater chance of juvenile delinquent behavior if parents and/or the community support, encourage, or tolerate antisocial attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Literature suggests that the factors responsible for the increase in juvenile delinquency in our society could be categorised into two: proximal and distal factors. Some of the proximal factors include antisocial attitudes, values, and beliefs, dysfunctional parenting, poor school and vocational achievement and anti-social peer association. On the other hand, the distal factors include criminal/psychiatric problems in family of origin, family financial problems, poor accommodations and negative neighbourhood environments. Wong (2001) examined the interactive effects of criminogenic factors on delinquency among youth in China and Hong Kong. Subjects in the retrospective study comprised 63 male youth (aged 12-18 years) residing in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China, 32 of whom were convicted delinquents. Subjects completed interviews concerning parental closeness and supervision, reaction to parental supervision, academic performance, and relationships with classmates and teachers, reactions to teaching practices, and time spent in sports activities, youth clubs, and religious activities. Results show that 65% of Hong Kong delinquent subjects, and 40% of Guangzhou delinquent Subjects came from broken homes (distal factor).

There are many examples of youth criminal and deviant behavior in African civilization. These crimes include, but are not limited to, theft, arson, rape, drug offenses, murder, burglary, pickpocketing, and armed robbery; they also include running away from home or school, lying, being absent, and bullying (Eke, 2004). In particular, there are several instances of youthful delinquency in. Teenagers engage in a wide range of illegal and deviant behaviors, from small-time theft to large-scale armed robberies and the sporadic murdering of innocent individuals. In 2018, there were 987 juvenile delinquents for every 100,000 children under the age of 17. Most of these juveniles were arrested for small-time offenses including shoplifting, stealing, and pick-pocketing (Eke, 2019). Just over 589 cases of juvenile delinquency were identified and categorized in 2007 alone, according to the Department of Social Welfare Annual Report (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2007). According to Animashaun and Animashaun's (2014) study, in just 2013 around 160 young criminals were imprisoned in the Prison Service, which is now a correctional facility. Juvenile delinquency is on the rise in the state of Kwara (Tiamiyu et al., 2023). The interior regions of the state are rife with juvenile gangs, particularly in Ilorin City. These gangs have been involved in a variety of criminal activities, including drug usage, substance sales, brawling, theft, and acts of violence, among others. They employ deadly weapons, such as firearms, machetes, and other weapons of mass destruction, particularly when there is violence. They are prone to develop into adult offenders if their actions are not appropriately monitored.

From the foregoing, it may be concluded that adolescent delinquency is both universal and relative. It is universal because it affects all societies equally, regardless of their degree of development. It is relative, though, as its frequency and severity differ throughout societies. One nation's rate is probably higher than the other. The body of research suggests that a variety of variables can influence juvenile and adolescent delinquent behavior (Shader, 2019). It is against this backdrop that this study examines the distal factors affecting juvenile delinquency: a study of Borstal Home, Ganmo, Kwara State.

This study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To examine accommodation as distal factors influencing juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State; and
- ii. To examine neighbourhood environment as distal factor influencing juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State.
- iii. To examine criminal and psychiatric problems as distal factor influencing juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State.
- iv. To examine family financial problem as distal factor influencing juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State.

Hypothesis

A null hypothesis was formulated for the study:

1. There is no significant influence of accommodation, neighborhood environment, criminal and psychiatric problem and family financial problems on juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State.

Methodology

A descriptive research design of correlational type was adopted for this study. Association between the independent variables (distal factors) and dependent variable (juvenile delinquency) were explored. The study was carried out among juvenile delinquents remanded at Borstal Training Institute. The juvenile delinquents that were considered were those whose age ranges from 6 to 18 years. The total number of delinquent juveniles remanded in Borstal Training as at August 2020 was 191. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select 181 delinquent juvenile remanded at Borsal Training Institute as the respondents of the study. The researcher's developed questionnaire was adopted as the study research instrument. The questionnaires comprised only close ended questions. The instrument was developed by the researcher and then examined to ensure that it has good face validity. Frequency and percentage analyses were employed to analyze the demographic data of the respondents while Data collected was analysed using Multiple regression.

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	144	79.6
Female	37	20.4%
Total	181	100
Religion:		
Christianity	68	37.6%
Islam	113	62.4%
Total	181	100
Tribe:		
Yoruba	58	32.0
Igbo	24	13.3
Hausa	95	52.5
Others	4	2.2
Total	181	100
Age:		
12 and below	7	3.9
13-14	21	11.6
15-16	99	54.7
17	54	29.8
Total	181	100
Marital status of parents:		
Married		
Never married	113	62.4
Mother deceased	26	14.4
Both parents deceased	11	6.1
Divorced or separated (but both still alive)	21	11.6
Total	10	5.5
	181	100
Who they are living with:		
Biological parents (either father or mother alive)		
Grandmother/father	86	47.5
Stepmother/father	59	32.6
Uncle or aunt	8	4.4
Brother or sister	5	2.8
Neighbours	11	6.1
Nobody	4	2.2
Total	8	4.4
	181	100
Family size:		
1-3	24	13.3
4-6	99	54.7
Above 7	58	32.0
Total	181	100

Source: Researcher’s fieldwork (2020)

From table 1, 79.6% of the respondents were males; while 20.4% of them were females. This implies that the majority of respondents were males. It was observed that the juvenile reform homes are dominated by males perhaps because male child is culturally perceived to be tough compared to female child. In other words, male child is more likely to be incarcerated than female child because of their usual exuberance. On religion, the results revealed that 37.6% of the respondents were Christians; while 62.4% of the respondents were Muslims. This does not imply that Muslim children are more likely to be delinquent juveniles than Christian children. The difference could be as a result of the research context; the research context is dominated by Muslims. It was observed that some parents engage some Islamic clerics in the study context to discipline their male children engaging/displaying bad behaviours. On tribe, about 32.0% of the respondents were Yoruba; 13.3% were Igbo; 52.5% were Hausa; while 2.2% were from other tribes. From these results, the majority of the respondents were Hausa. This could be that some children are sent from different states especially from the north so that they would be far away from their parents.

On age of the respondents, the majority of the respondents were between 15 and 17 years of age (85.5%). It was observed that delinquent behaviours might have started earlier (let say below 14), their severity and audacity become stronger as they age. Importantly, 62.4% of the respondents mentioned that the marriage of their parents were still intact; 14.4% of the respondents said that their parents never married; 6.1% of them mentioned that their mothers had been deceased; 11.6% of the respondents said that their both parents had been deceased; while 5.5% of the respondents said that their parents were divorced or separated. This implies that marriage status of their parents does not really prevent juvenile delinquency as 62.4% of the delinquent children in the study setting mentioned that the marriage of their parents were still intact. However, they might be living in abusive and violent families. Some marriages are intact but they are negative as partners engage in all sorts of abusive and violent behaviours in the presence of their children.

Further analysis showed that 47.5% of the respondents were living with their biological parents; 32.6% of them were living with their grandmother/father; 4.4% of them were living with their stepmother/father;

2.8% of them were living with their uncle/aunt; 6.1% of them were living with their brother/sister; 2.2% were living with their neighbours; while 4.4% of them said they were living with 'nobody'. About 50 percent of the respondents were living with their biological parents. The fact that they are living with their biological parents should have prevented them from engaging in violent and delinquent behaviours. However, they are displaying and engaging in delinquent behaviour. This implies that being living with biological parents does not prevent delinquent acts. Also, the majority of the respondents said that their family size was between 4 and 7 (86.7%); while 13.3% said that their family size was between 1 and 3. This implies that large family size could be a determinant/driver of juvenile delinquency. The reason could be that parental supervision and monitoring wanes as family grows larger. Poor or inadequate parental supervision and monitoring could lead to juvenile delinquency.

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant influence of accommodation, neighborhood environment, criminal and psychiatric problem and family financial problems on juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State.*

Table 2: Regression Results showing influence of accommodation, neighborhood environment, criminal and psychiatric problem and family financial problems on juvenile delinquency among children of Borstal Training School, Ganmo, Ilorin, Kwara State.

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.681	1.090		4.295	.000
Poor accommodation	.053	.446	.009	.119	.905
Negative neighbourhood environment	.140	.331	.031	.423	.673
Limited criminal and psychiatric problems	-.171	.267	-.051	-.642	.522
Financial stability and sustainability in the family	-.754	.308	-.234	-2.449	.015
R² = 0.326		F = 10.381 and it is significant at 0.001			

The R^2 for this model is 0.326 which indicates 32.6% of the variation in the juvenile crimes committed (dependent variable) can be explained by negative neighbourhood environments, limited criminal/psychiatric problem, anti-social attitudes, poor accommodation, pro-social peer association, poor school, functional parenting and financial stability and sustainability in the family (independent variables). From the table, the F-value of 10.381 is significant at the 0.001 level. This indicates that the overall regression model with these independent variables (negative neighbourhood, poor accommodation, limited criminal and psychiatric problem, financial stability and sustainability in the family) can well explain the variation of the dependent variable (juvenile crimes committed)

Negative neighbourhood environment ($\beta=0.031$) has the greatest impact on juvenile crimes committed. This implies that for every unit increase in negative neighbourhood, there would be an increase of 0.031 in juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant. This is followed by poor accommodation ($\beta=0.009$). This implies that for every unit increase in poor achievement, there would be 0.009 increase in juvenile crimes

committed when other variables are held constant. Furthermore, the impact of limited criminal and psychiatric problems is negative ($\beta = -0.051$). For every unit increase in the level of criminal and psychiatric problems, there would be 0.051 reduction in juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant. Similarly, the impact of limited family financial problem is negative ($\beta = -0.234$). For every unit increase in the level of family financial problem, there would be 0.234 reduction in juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that negative neighbourhood environment ($\beta = 0.031$) has the greatest impact on juvenile crimes committed. This implies that for every unit increase in negative neighbourhood, there would be an increase of 0.031 in juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant. This agrees with Adeyemo (2007), Anumonye (1996), Clements (2004), Desalu, et al. (2010). They argued that children who are exposed to violence in their neighbourhoods are more likely to become delinquent children. These young people are more likely to carry guns for self-defense. This also in line with the social disorganisation theory (Shaw & McKay, 1969) and broken Window theory (Wilson & Kelly, 1990) which state that disadvantaged neighbourhood produce delinquent acts. This is also related to another distal factor - poor accommodation ($\beta = 0.009$). For every unit increase in poor accommodation, there would be 0.009 increase in juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the impact of limited criminal and psychiatric problems in the family is negative ($\beta = -0.051$). For every unit increase in the level of criminal and psychiatric problems, there would be 0.051 reduction in juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant. Parents who engage in criminality would inculcate negative or anti-social values in the children, which signify weak and negative means of social control (Kobiowu, 2006; Nnachi, 2007; Nnaji, 2000; & Obot, et al., 2001). Also, this finding underpinned the theoretical assumptions of social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1977), and social control theory of Reiss (1951), Nye (1958), Reckless (1967), Hirschi (1969), Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) and Agnew (1991). Similarly, the impact of limited family financial problem is negative ($\beta = -0.234$). For every unit increase in the level of family financial capacity, there would be 0.234 reduction in

juvenile crimes committed when other variables are held constant. Poverty is a reoccurring factor in juvenile delinquency that is progressively getting worse in Nigeria. Families experiencing hardships are forced to carry the burden without help and sometimes even place some of that weight on these adolescents. Dealing with many of these burdens in hostile and unsafe environments leads to complex trauma in developing brains.

Conclusion

The study concludes that negative neighborhood environment, poor accommodation, Limited criminal and psychiatric problems, financial stability and sustainability in the family, have significant influence on juvenile delinquency. These factors have the potentials of increasing or decreasing delinquent behaviours committed by the children/adolescents.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the findings, the following recommendations were suggested:

- (i) The government should implement community development programmes aimed at improving the physical and social infrastructure of disadvantage neighborhoods.
- (ii) There should be increase in the provision of social services in neighborhoods with poor accommodations and negative environment. This includes expanding access to mental health services, mentorship programmes and after-school activities that engage youth in positive social network.
- (iii) Poverty in the family should be tackled by initiating and implementing family supports programmes. In other words, struggling poor families should be empowered. Empowerment programs should be spread to all families in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

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