



BUILDING A
SAFER
WORLD
THROUGH
EDUCATION

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PREVALENCE OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A STRATEGIC THREAT TO BUILDING A SAFER WORLD

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Introduction

Nearly every society since the dawn of history has looked on youth crime as a serious problem, and our society is not different. Juvenile delinquency according to Adegoke (2015) refers to delinquent and criminal behaviour among young people as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and confusing world. Although the issue of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, but obviously, it seems that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with that of the present era. The antisocial behaviours often associated with the juvenile delinquents' in recent times, include 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 society emerging in Nigeria will remain elusive.

Although, according to Moffit, (2009), the problem of juvenile delinquency, particularly in urban areas, is growing significantly in recent years globally. Marte (2008) also affirmed that Juvenile delinquency and youth crime is a serious social issue across the globe. A 2009 global survey of juvenile crime in cities, conducted by United Nation Habitat reported by Ekpenyong, Raimi and Ekpeyong (2012), collected considerable data on the dynamics of the problem. The survey reported that in Europe, juvenile crime had increased by 2.6% compared to the previous year's increase of 1.7%. South East Asia,

Latin America and North America were reported to have juvenile crime growth rates of 0.7%, 3.9% and 1.8% respectively. The relatively high rate of juvenile crime in Latin America has been attributed to the drug economy in places like Mexico and Colombia (Raul, 2010). In Africa, according to Ekpenyong, Raimi and Ekpeyong (2012), from United Nation Habitat survey results, juvenile criminality has continued to increase largely as a result of chronic unemployment among youth. They reported that, between 2007 and 2009, juvenile crime increase is from 3.2% to 5.7%. Such increases have also been linked to the rate at which cities proliferate or the levels of urbanization and the social changes and complexities that accompany these processes, including urban poverty (Bartol and Bartol, 2009). Urbanization-related increases in crime rates are often more common in Africa where average annual growth rates have been estimated at 7.2% between 1980 and 1990 and 9.3% between 1990 and 2000. The ever-growing phenomenon of urban poverty means considerable deprivations for hundreds of thousands on a daily basis. Moffit (2009) highlighted the followings as some of the daily challenges encountered by the urban poor: limited access to employment opportunities and income, inadequate and insecure housing and services, violent and unhealthy environments, little or no social protection mechanisms, and limited access to adequate health and education opportunities.

Alemika and chukwuma (2005) opined that the underlining philosophy of juvenile justice as the history of child welfare in Nigeria became very interest and of concern for all because it touches, the whole society, the government, homes/family and all stake holders. The trend in the tackling 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.

In Nigeria, according to Adegoke (2015) youth involvement in crime is one of the key areas that the Nigeria Police Force is concerned about. He reported that in 2010, Nigeria Police Force listed youth involvement in crimes as one of their three main areas

of concerns. From his report, typical crimes committed by youths include shop theft, theft and rioting, shop theft being the most common. The report further stated that in 2001, Nigerian adolescents committed over 185,000 crimes and 19,000 were sentenced to prison. In 2005, 31% of youths arrested in Nigeria committed shop theft, whilst 17% of the youths arrested committed theft, and 11% of the youths arrested committed rioting.

The problem of juvenile delinquency is a complex and multifaceted one. As highlighted by former Inspector General of Police in Makinde (2007), "no single factor explains why youths turn to crime; most youths crime are caused by a combination of factors. In particular, the major factors contributing to juvenile delinquency in Nigeria are: dysfunctional families, weak attachment to school, negative peer influence and involvement in youth gangs (Alemika and Chukwuka, 2005). They further remarked that other factors that may influence delinquency include the socio-economic status of youths and their parents. Notably, as depicted by these various factors, the causes and conditions for juvenile delinquency can be found at different levels of the social structure-society, social institutions, social groups and interpersonal and family relations (United Nations 2004). Meanwhile, Heilbrum, Goldstein and Reddings (2005) asserted that "youthful behaviour or conduct that does not conform to overall social norms and values is often part of the maturation and growth process and tends to disappear spontaneously in most individuals with the transition to adulthood"; a great majority of young people commit some kind of petty offence at some point during their adolescence without this turning into a criminal career in the long term. In our today's edition, we bring you a very crucial topic, which is, the role of youth in national development.

The Role of Youth in building a safer world

Nfamara Jawneh (2012) observed that young people in any country represent the future of that country and they have a vital role to play in the development of the country a duty they must perform. He stated

many ways that youth can contribute to national development. Such as working hard in any field they are involved in, be it the teaching, mechanic, or farming field, working for one's nation with total devotion and commitment is an obligation for every citizen thus the need to have orientation events for our youth to teach them what national service is all about. However, to ensure the active participation of young people in national development, they need to be supported and encouraged by the government, the private sector, the civil society and their parents. by help our youth get to where they want and enable them become effective contributors to nation-building all hands must be on deck in achieving this objective, as the youth need support and motivation.

Predisposing factors of juvenile delinquency

One major factor affecting juvenile delinquency according to Dantiye and Haruna (2004) is family well-being. Dysfunctional families and lack of familiar attachment and supervision are one of the most potent factors that influence juvenile delinquency (Martin 2005). As values, norms and models of behaviour arise from the family, dysfunctional families will transmit dysfunctional norms (rather than functional norms) to their children, and this in turn affect their beliefs, personality, attitudes and behaviour (e.g. cause deviant behaviour). Based on empirical findings of the study carried out by Adegoke (2015), three variables namely family stability, family cohesion, and family adaptability were drawn on and from the results obtained, there was a cumulative effect such that the presence of more than one of these negative family attributes compounded the likelihood of delinquency. Since children who are inadequately supervised by parents, whose parents fail to teach them the difference between right and wrong, whose parents do not monitor their whereabouts and activities, whose parents discipline them erratically and harshly, and those who experience some measure of violence in the home are more likely to become delinquent. It has therefore become apparent that a healthy home environment is the most important fac-

tor necessary to keep children from becoming delinquent.

Martin (2005) cited example of children who encounter violence in their immediate family environments are more likely to exhibit the same behaviour, and thus may be more prone to be involved in gangs and committing violent crimes such as fighting and rioting. Healthy families on the other hand tend to transmit functional norms of behaviour to their children. He stated further that in Nigeria society, dysfunctional family is defined by Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture quoting Aderinto and Okunola (2009) as "those who experience multiple or severe problems that adversely affect the well-being of the family". These families "have difficulty finding work or sustaining development, and may experience family violence, problems with addiction, and trouble with the law". They stated further that, in Minister's speech during the Committee of Supply debate in 2009, the Minister highlighted that Nigeria had an estimated 7,500 of such dysfunctional families. Notably, many delinquent youths in Nigeria that were under the Juvenile Court's supervision were from broken and dysfunctional families (Alemikta and Chukwuma, 2006).

Similar to global trends, one problem amongst juvenile offenders in Nigeria is lack of parental involvement and supervision (Dantiye and Haruna, 2004). To corroborate this, Adégoke (2015) submitted that many cases that involve youth offenders, parents are often unaware of their child's arrests. The lax parental supervision also meant that by the time parents decide to increase supervision, they would have already lost control over their child. Besides, a lack communication between parents and their children may also lead the child to perceive the concerns of parents and the restrictions that parents impose as unreasonable, and thus causing the child to become defiant and rebellious (Anabogu, 2000).

Besides, another major factor contributing to juvenile development is the lack of family attachment. An empirically study by Adégoke (2015) showed that offenders felt a lesser sense of attachment to their families compared to non-offenders. Notably, like many countries worldwide, the institution of family in Nigeria has

undergone many changes. As the number of divorces increase in Nigeria, there has been an increasingly number of single-parent families (Makinde, 2007). These break-ups of the family unit often results in inadequate love, care, attention being provided to children. In addition, the increased number of dual-income families and the increased hiring foreign domestic workers and caregivers may also have result in less parental involvement and supervision (Yakub 2006). He added that while these factors do not definitely lead to juvenile delinquency, they have significant repercussions on juvenile behavior. As revealed in Lochner and Levitt (2003) study, 52% of delinquents were from single-parent families. Another study by Ekpeyong, Raimi and Ekpeyong (2012) revealed that there was a higher number of youths offenders (compared to non-offenders) who are not living with their both parents.

Poor academic achievement has consistently predicted later delinquency (McShane and Williams 2007, Anabogu, 2000). Academic failure in the elementary levels increases risk for later violent behavior (McShane and Williams 2007). Makinde (2007) established the relationship between poor academic achievement and violence later in life. The educational experience of youths affects juvenile development, alongside familiar experiences and socio-economic status, as the school environment may affect a child's self-esteem and self-worth (Martin 2005). Youths in Nigeria who fell into delinquency have been found to have performed more poorly in school and have a much higher rate of having troubles in school than non-delinquents (Olotuah and Adesiji 2009). This is consonant with general societal trends in other countries which show that poor academic performers and school drop-outs tend to commit delinquent acts much more than high academic achievers and graduates.

Negative Peer Influence is another contributing factors of juvenile delinquency, according to the empirical study by Adegoke (2015) delinquents tend to be socialized by peers, they commit crimes or delinquent acts due to their close association and attachment with peer groups that endorses antisocial conduct. This is

opposed to character logical delinquents whose behaviours tend to stem from individual motivations and a social personality disorientation (Meldrun, Young and Weerman 2009). Negative peer influence is often found to be linked to the absence or lack of parental influence and familiar attachment. As family attachment, research has shown that youth groups and juvenile gangs 'compensate for the imperfections of family and school', with youths considering their gang members (Marte 2008).

Youth violence often results from disputes between youth gangs over trivial issues and rivalry amongst these gangs always lead to fights. As noted, youth involvement in gangs is strongly related to other factors such as educational experience and family well-being. Most youths who turn to gangs are usually school drop-outs or non-academically inclined students who "feel ostracized" by their classmates, teachers and parents and they join gangs for company, friends and a sense of belonging. Alemika and Chukwuma (2005) reported that youths are involved in crimes of violence that include murder, rioting, extortion and unlawful assembly. Notably, such youth violence is commonly the result of disputes between youth gangs over trivial matters and rivalry amongst these gangs which lead to fights.

Economic Factor: Poverty and Youth Unemployment is another contributing factors

In many African countries, there is evidence of an increase in juvenile crime taking place concurrently with economic decline, especially in large cities (Moser, 2006). He explained further that, the rapid urbanization process, together with persistent poverty, inequality, political violence, the inadequacy of social services, the consolidation of transnational crime organizations, the spread of drug use and drug trafficking, the disintegration of families and social networks, and the availability of weapons, are all considered and often cited as the root causes of the upsurge in juvenile crime. The vulnerability of youth to poverty and marginalization is well illustrated by the number of adolescents working to supplement family

income in Nigeria. The International Labour Office n Dantiye and Haruna (2004) estimates that there are at least 15 million children working in urban Africa, and that approximately half of these are between the ages of 6 and 14 years old. World Bank (2009) estimates that in Nigeria, 54 percent of urban adolescents and children aged 6-14 are working, most of them in the precarious informal sector and in hazardous conditions. In many cases, street children later become young offenders, having already encountered violence in their immediate social environment as either witnesses or victims of violent acts.

Moser (2006) asserted that the socio-economic status of youths is often related to and intertwined with the amount and quality of support they receive. For example, parents from low-income families have to work long hours, and this may diminish the time spent with their children and may result in adequate and poor communication between parent and child. Study by Yaqub (2006) found that the "most serious" delinquents tended to hail from lower-income families where parents work long hours with meager income.

It is important to note that there is considerable empirical research on poverty and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. Ekpeyong, Raimi and Ekpeyong (2012) concluded that poverty in cities is a major driver of juvenile criminality, it was deduced from their study that 69% of the respondents attested to the fact that children from poor homes commit more crime than those from rich homes. Olutuah and Adesoji (2009) has another study that support the finding, that those children from poor homes find themselves in conflict with the law more often than their counterparts from rich homes, they affirmed that the poor children more often leave home because of the poor living conditions and are consequently exposed to criminality early in their lives.

Media As a Factor as television and movies have popularized the "cult of heroes" which promotes justice through physical elimination of enemies. Many researchers concluded that young people who

watch violence tend to behave more aggressively or violently, particularly when provoked. Labelling is another risk factor of juvenile delinquency, it is part of interactionism criminology that states that once young people have been labelled as criminal, they are more likely to offend the idea is that labelled as deviant a young person may accept that role and be more likely to associate with others who have been similarly labelled. Labelling theorists say that male children from poor families are more likely to be labelled deviant, and that this may particularly explain why there are more working class young male offenders.

Juvenile Delinquency Threat to a Safer World

The numerous consequences stemming from gang involvement can have varying degrees of short and long-term negative outcomes. Youth who become involved in gangs face the increased risk of: dropping out of school; teen parenthood; unemployment; drug and alcohol abuse; committing petty and violent crimes; and juvenile conviction and incarceration.¹ Further, a youth's involvement with a gang (or gangs) also leads to an increased likelihood of economic hardship and family problems in adulthood, which in turn, contribute to involvement in street crime and/or arrest in adulthood. Research has suggested that the longer an adolescent stays in a gang the more disruption he or she will experience while transitioning into adulthood and in adulthood itself.² Further, a youth's involvement with a gang (or gangs) also leads to an increased likelihood of economic hardship and family problems in adulthood, which in turn, contribute to involvement in street crime and/or arrest in adulthood. Research has suggested that the longer an adolescent stay in a gang the more disruption he or she will experience while transitioning into adulthood and in adulthood itself. Community members face heightened fear that they, their families, schools, or businesses, will become victims of theft and/or violence. Further, communities with gang activity are disproportionately affected by

theft, negative economic impact, vandalism, assault, gun violence, illegal drug trade, and homicide (McDaniel 2012)

Lesley (2006) opined that the most obvious people affected by juvenile delinquency are the victims. Whether the crime involves theft, vandalism, or violence, the victim always suffers loss. The victim may incur expenses related to lost wages, health care, or psychological care in addition to the cost of replacing damaged or destroyed items. The juvenile who commits a crime also suffers effects that he or she is probably unable to predict. He or she may lose his or her freedom while being incarcerated or placed on probation. The juvenile may lose ground academically as well. Although placement in residential detention centers for juveniles may be appropriate consequences for the adolescent's criminal actions, it also puts him or her in relationships with other delinquents, who may be more sophisticated or influential. This makes recidivism likely and, in many states, when a juvenile older than 14 becomes a repeat offender, he or she can be tried and sentenced as an adult. The delinquency may even have future consequences on the adolescent's college and career choices. The upheaval and trauma of having a family member who is a juvenile delinquent can create instability for the other relatives. Not only does the family have to cope with the needs of the child who is in trouble, but they may also have to raise large amounts of money to pay for lawyers. In addition, the family has to face the ethical issues of responsibility to the victims of the child's crime. He also added that families must usually attend group counseling sessions, which can be disruptive and costly during the time when the child is in detention or on probation. The upheaval and trauma of having a family member who is a juvenile delinquent can create instability for the other relatives. Not only does the family have to cope with the needs of the child who is in trouble, but they may also have to raise large amounts of money to pay for lawyers. In addition, the family has to face the ethical issues of responsibility to the victims of the child's crime. Families must

usually attend group counseling sessions, which can be disruptive and costly during the time when the child is in detention or on probation. Young people who commit serious crimes before they are 18 years old challenge the future for everyone involved. They may be acting out to protest perceived abuses that have been perpetrated against them. They may believe that there is no future for them outside of a life of crime. They may be expressing anger or frustration directed against another person or group or looking for approval from a gang. Whatever the motive, juvenile delinquency affects too many American individuals, families, and communities. It is a serious problem that challenges the efforts of government agencies, politicians, educators, faith communities, and nonprofit organizations alike.

Strategies For Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency

The solution to the prevention of juvenile delinquency is a multidisciplinary approach which will take into account the family, community environment and the governmental agency. Parent may ultimately have the most control over the behaviours of their children, when families, simply find time to be together, it increase the possibility for positive outcomes and delinquency prevention

World Youth Report (2003) identified some strategies, to prevent Juvenile Delinquency as follow: there should be professional development programmes being set up to provide legal alternatives for income generation, supplying adolescent and young people with increased economic opportunities, educating young people to learn how to engage in positive self appraisal, deal with the conflict and control aggression.

Patrick (1988) noted that the primary responsibility for the prevention of juvenile delinquency is with child's parent or other family members who are responsible for caring for the child various societal organization and institution also help shape the young child's character.

Family can make or break the personality of the children as family who could not give firm foundation to the children can make

adolescent show delinquent behaviour such as broken homes, single parents, family frequent parent fight, lack of trust and confidence among parents, criminal parents or psychological problems in parent can be the most important reason behind juvenile delinquency.

Mohammed (2013) stressed that, family should have a positive attitude towards life and towards society. Parent and elders siblings should show positive values, norms and standards of society in this way, the children will be able to show the right behaviour to the society. Government should support families that have poor economic status so that they can improve their financial condition, parent should also teach children the importance of respecting laws of society. Children especially teenage children have not reached the age of maturity where they know they can differentiate between good or bad, therefore parents should keep an eye on their children especially the friends of their children and their other mates so as to prevent them from keeping bad gangs, parent should create a healthy and friendly relationship with their children, in this way children feel free to share anything and everything with their parents.

Seminars on juvenile delinquency should be organized by Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education in cooperation with law enforcement agencies and number of youth organizations directed at school students as well as parent and caregivers and the topic of discussion should include causes of delinquency, prevention and rehabilitation of juveniles and different roles which the public authorities and non governmental organizations can play to eradicate or reduce cases of juvenile delinquency. Government should create an enabling environment by providing employment for the jobless parents to enhance their living standard to take proper financial care of their children, small scale refurbishing loans can be granted to parents to boost their business as well. Juvenile Delinquency should be included as a topic in Health Education curriculum and should be thought by health education specialist from primary to tertiary institution, this will acquaint the students with the

knowledge of the predisposing factors of the juvenile delinquent and the danger consequence of involve in such act, thus once the students are knowledgeable about this social milieu, they will be able to educate the large population on how to prevent or subjecting to adolescent to such behaviour.

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