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Family Instability and Juvenile Delinquency Among Junior Secondary School Students in Obudu Local Government Area Of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to examine Family Instability and Juvenile Delinquency among Junior Secondary School Students in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Four research questions and four research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Literature review was done based on the sub-independent variables. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the 200 respondents from the 10 Council Wards in the Local Government Area for the study. To collect data for the study, the researcher designed and validated 20 items four points modified Likert Scale Questionnaire titled: Family Instability and Juvenile Delinquency among Junior Secondary School Students Questionnaire (FIJDJSSSQ) which was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was face validated by two experts in test and measurement and the researcher's supervisor. Chi Square statistical tool was used for data analysis. The result of the analysis revealed that, there is a significant influence of family structure, family size, and broken home and inadequate parental supervision of families on juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students in the study area. Among the recommendation made based on the findings was that, families should be educated on the danger that juvenile delinquency poses to the educational development of the junior secondary school students, they should therefore think of ways of

	developing a closer relationship with their children and closely supervise and monitor their relationships with other children and the level of their commitment to their studies to avoid them becoming delinquent children.

Introduction

The family is the foundation of human society; it is the strongest socializing force of life. The family as a universal social institution exists in all human society. It forms the basis without which no society can survive. It is from there that the individual picks up "self" through the process of socialization.

Children are taught how to eschew unacceptable behaviours, to delay gratification and to respect the right of others. The family is characterized by high levels of closeness, loyalty, and dependency. Conversely, some families can teach children aggressive, anti-social, and violent behaviours. Also, children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflicts, or who are inadequately supervised are at the greatest risk of becoming delinquent. Adolescence is a time of expanding vulnerabilities and opportunities that accompany the widening social and geographical exposure to life beyond the school or family, but it starts with the family (Adegoke, 2015).

Hoffman & Johnson (2018) state that, many sociologists regard the family as the cornerstone of society. It forms the basic unit of social organization and it is difficult to imagine how society could function without it. Although the composition of the family varies, for example in many societies two or more wives are regarded as the ideal arrangement, such difference can be seen as minor variations. In general, the family has been seen as a universal social institution, as an inevitable part of human society. On the whole it has been regarded as functional both for the individual and society as a whole. The family, through the process of socialization, nurtures and prepares children to be productive members of society. It equips them with the cultural values and skills necessary for the society to survive continuously. Family members receive their basic needs, such as emotional and physical care, from their families. In most societies, there are groups or organizations that take up the responsibility of caring for or protecting the members of the society under certain circumstances. The family, however, seems to be the most appropriate of them all, especially regarding daily living in an impersonal environment caused by rapid changes.

Juvenile delinquency is an intractable problem worldwide and has been increasing phenomenally by as much as 30 percent since the 1990s. Anti-social behaviours of young people have been posing a lot of problems to the wellbeing of the people in Nigeria. Citizens, researchers and public officials perceive juvenile delinquency as a major social contemporary

concern in Nigeria. Juvenile crimes witnessed in Nigeria include: drug abuse, cultism, bullying, truancy, examination malpractices, prostitution and theft (Vitaro, Pedersen, & Brendgen (2017)).

Shumaker (2010) states that, juvenile delinquency as "illegal acts, whether criminal or status offences, which are committed by youth under the age of 18". The origin of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria dates back to the 1920s when youth crimes such as pick pocketing and prostitution became predominant issues in Nigerian newspapers in that period. This ugly trend led to the establishment of judicial administrative processes by the colonial administrators to deal with juvenile delinquents. Family instability is on the increase in Nigeria and that the increasing crime trends among the youths may be attributed to this. Family instabilities has serious negative effects on juvenile delinquency among school children, as it affect their lack of interest and negative attitude toward schooling which reduce their educational development. Variables applicable to family instabilities that have effects on juvenile delinquency among school children are noted to be some of the factors responsible for the underdevelopment of the educational level of most secondary school students. In view of the foregoing issues and trends globally and locally, many researchers agree that the foundation of juvenile delinquency is rooted in the kind of home the child is brought up (Okorodudu, 2010; Igbo, 2007). Muhammed et al (2009) have observed that family instability is on the increase in Nigeria and that the increasing crime trends among the youths may be attributed to this. Based on the foregoing, the paper aims at examining the relationship between family instability and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria with focus on Obudu local government area of cross river state.

Problem Statement

It has been observed that, the family no longer functions as a useful social unit. Divorce, single-parent families, isolation, role conflict, out-of-wedlock births, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, and violence are some of the problems affecting the family today. A broken home is considered a major cause of delinquency. The rise of the divorce means that single-parent families have been increasing which is causing the rising spat of juvenile delinquency among school students.

Isolation also is a major problem affecting many families. This is as a result of urbanization, increased mobilization, dehumanizing jobs, and the disintegration of communities, neighborhoods and support networks. The declining impact of the extended family, which traditionally offered numerous advantages to children because it relived some of the pressures of parenting, has further contributed to the problem of isolation. Violence has been a major characteristic of the family in the past, and it is no stranger to family life today. Marital violence is rapidly becoming recognized as a pervasive problem that affect nearly a third of the world's population.

Inadequate supervision and discipline in the home have been commonly identified as one of the major problems causing delinquent behavior among young people in the society. Also, the

rate of delinquency increased with the incidence of mothers employed outside the home and the disciplinary role of the father is seen more closely related to delinquent behaviour than the disciplinary role of the mother. Since the family is the first social group a child encounters and is the group with which most children have their most enduring relationships. The family teaches social roles, moral standards, and society's laws, and it disciplines children who fail to comply with those norms and values. Where these are missing due to improper socialization, violence or one of those problems affecting the family, it becomes a problem both for the individual and society as a whole. Also, the fact that children learn most of their behaviour from the home, it is clear that whatever they are exposed to in the home, they tend to exhibit to the society. On the whole, the rate of delinquency appears to increase with the number of unfavourable factors in the home. That is, multiple "handicaps" within the family are associated with a higher probability of juvenile delinquency than single handicaps.

Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria is a major social problem which affects the whole society and constitutes a serious impediment to development. It is observed in the society today that, crime is common among the young people, many of who are caught in one criminal act or the other such as examination malpractice, armed robbery, assault, rape, house breaking, forgery, truancy e.t.c. Young people in contemporary Nigeria are mostly involved in armed robbery, cultism, kidnapping, drug abuse and other criminal activities. The consequences of this malady and other juvenile crimes such as; examination malpractice, alcoholism, forgery, rape, etc. in Nigeria include; social violence among youths, armed robbery, mental disorders, lack of respect for elders and other numerous social ills. The prevailing problems that are mostly causing juvenile delinquency among school children are; poverty, peer pressure, family structure, drug abuse and so on.

The rise of anti-social behaviours among young people in Nigeria is attributed to family instability among other factors. Children from unstable families have multiple behavioural problems which impel them to engage in delinquent behaviours. This can happen because the warmth, direction, love and protection which the parents would have provided for them are lost and then sought in anti-social behaviours such as drug abuse and other behaviours which will eventually lead to juvenile delinquency.

Many government policies have been put in place to curb the issue of juvenile delinquency among young school children, but with minimal result. This probably is as a result of the low economic status and unstable families of most Nigerians who barely earn enough to feed themselves and their children. In view of the above phenomenon, this study is seeking to examine Family Instabilities and Juvenile Delinquency among Junior Secondary School Students in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

This review of literature discussed various aspects of family instability and their influence on juvenile delinquency.

Family structure and Juvenile Delinquency: Broken homes have been mostly associated with juvenile delinquency.

In a study carried out by Muola, Ndugu & Ngesa (2019) on the relationship between family functions and juvenile delinquency in Nakuru municipality in Kenya found out that the incidences of juvenile delinquency have increased in recent years in Kenya. Juvenile delinquency was found to be significantly related to family structure and mode of discipline. The researchers suggested that there was a relationship between family functions and juvenile delinquency in Kenya. Fourchard (2016) in a study on the relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency in Port Harcourt also decried the increasing trend of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, attributing the upsurge to familial factors amongst contributory variables.

Peeples & Loeber (2014) stated that, the effects of family structure on juvenile delinquency show that, family structure is an important factor in explaining delinquency among adolescents. Juvenile delinquency is seen as one of the menace that destroys life and property in our society today. Because of the nature of crime committed by juvenile parents, guidance, sponsors and well-wishers are worried and disturbed about our future leaders. Crime associated with juvenile include: rape, stealing, burglary, disobedience, homicide, truancy, vandalization and robbery etc.

According to Cashwell & Vacc (2016), two of the main factors influencing juvenile delinquency are the family structure that a child is exposed to, and the relationships adolescents have with parents. As with patterns of juvenile delinquency, family structure in many countries has also changed dramatically over the last century, becoming very diverse in today's society. Adolescents of all ages are living in many various types of homes, such as with single, married, and cohabiting parents. The families that children grow up in and the social environment in which they live can have major effects on their well-being.

Many researchers agree that the issues and trends family structure has globally and locally are the foundation of juvenile delinquency which is rooted in the kind of home the child is brought up (Okorodudu & Okorodudu, 2010). Muhammed, Salami, Adekeye, Ayinla, and Adeoye (2019) (2019) also observed that family instability is on the increase in Nigeria and that the increasing crime trends among the youths may be attributed to this.

Mullens (2004) has it that juveniles from broken homes are more likely to run away from their family than children living in stable families. The core assumption is that a broken home has an imbalance and as a result is detrimental to a child's socialization and personality adjustment. As a result, a child may be more susceptible to negative peer pressure and may ultimately

commit acts of delinquency not committed by children from stable families where there is a balanced structure of man and woman who act as good role models in the child acquiring more law abiding roles.

Alemika & Chukwuma (2001), in their study of juvenile administration in Nigeria averred that there is no significant relation between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This assertion contradicts Kymani's (2010) findings from a study of family influence on juvenile delinquency. Kimani found a positive relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This contrast may be as a result of differential focus of research and the methodologies adopted in the research

Inadequate Parental Supervision: Inadequate parental supervision arising from family instability has been adduced as a risk factor for juvenile delinquency.
Alfrys (2010) has asserted that children from fragmented families are scarcely supervised. He further elaborated that this inadequate supervision gives leverage to juvenile delinquency. This assertion is in agreement with that of Sanni et al (2010) who suggested that juveniles were likely to be delinquent if their activities are not adequately monitored.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical anchorage of this study is the Social Control theory. Social control theory in criminology was developed by an American criminologist; Travis Hirschi in the late 1960s.The theory posits that criminal behaviour and delinquency result from failure of individuals to bond with conventional social groups such as the family and schools (Miller, 2009). In other words, a person is less likely to choose crime if he/she has strong social bonds. Miller (2009:2) has it that "social control says that to the extent that a youngster fails to become attached to the control agencies of society (for instance, the families and the schools), the youngster's chances of engaging in delinquency are increased". Travis Hirschi identified four key concepts in his social control theory, viz: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001). According to Hirschi, attachment to others in the society provides the individuals insulation from committing deviant acts. Commitment entails an investment in conventional activities and norms. Involvement is behavioural and measures one's tendency to participate in conventional activities while belief in the legitimacy of social norms and values minimize delinquency (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001). The relevance of this theory could be linked to the main tenets as it applies to juvenile delinquency and family instability. Hence, the inability of the family as a social institution to bond with the children as a result of instability and disruptions could be associated with the problem of juvenile delinquency. However, social control theory has been criticized for ignoring the effects of parental behaviour in modeling youth conduct (Winfre and Abadinsky, 2003).

Methodology

The research design for this study is the descriptive survey. The population for this study consists of all junior secondary schools students in Obudu Local Government Area estimated at two thousand three hundred and fifty-two (2,352) while the target population consists of students from two randomly selected secondary schools from each of the council wards in the area. The sample for this study is 200 respondents out of the total of 2,352 junior secondary school students in the Local Government Area. A random sampling method was used for the selection of two hundred (200) junior secondary school students in the area. The instruments used for the study were structured questionnaire is titled: "Family Instabilities and Juvenile Delinquency among Junior Secondary School Students Questionnaire (FIJDJSSSQ)" and the interview guide. The analysis of the data involved descriptive and chi-square statistics. The four hypotheses of the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings and Discussion

Ho_1

There is no significant influence of family structure and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product moment correlation analysis was used and the result showed that ($r=.367$, $p<.05$). Which showed that there is a positive relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students

Variables	N	X	S.D	df	r-cal	p-val
Family structure	200	18.32	2.21			
				198	.367	.000
Juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students	200	32.67	8.09			

Ho_2

Hypothesis 2 states that family size does not significantly influence juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product moment correlation analysis was used and the result showed that ($r=.378$, $p<.05$) which showed that there is a positive relationship between family size and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students.

Table: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between family size and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students

Variables	N	X	S.D	df	r-cal	p-val
Family size	200	17.92	3.78			
				198	.357	.000
Juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students	200	32.67	8.09			

Ho_3

Hypothesis 3 states that there is no significant influence of broken home and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product moment correlation analysis was used and the result showed that ($r=.440$, $p<.05$) which showed that there is a positive relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students

Variables	N	X	S.D	df	r-cal	p-val
Broken homes	200	18.41	2.63			
				198	.440	.000
Juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students	200	32.67	8.09			

Ho_4

Hypothesis 4 states that inadequate parental supervision does not significantly influence juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product moment correlation analysis was used and the result showed that ($r=.624$, $p<.05$) which showed that there is a positive relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students.

Table 4: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between inadequate parental supervision and juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students

Variables	N	X	S.D	df	r-cal	p-val
Inadequate parental supervision	200	18.53	2.47			
				198	.624	.000
Juvenile delinquency among junior secondary school students	200	32.67	8.09			

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Family should be sensitized the more on the dangers juvenile delinquency among school children.
2. Civic education for the right values in families should be promoted in different communities and households for productive family relationships.
3. Government should come up with an effective poverty alleviation blueprint and sensitization that can effectively place people on the right track of empowerment and self-reliant.
4. Families should be educated on the dangers that juvenile delinquency poses to the educational development of their children.
5. Families should think of ways of developing a closer relationship with their children and closely supervise and monitor their relationships with other children and the level of their commitment to their studies to avoid those becoming delinquent children.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to investigate the extent to which family structure, family size, broken home and inadequate parental supervision have influence on the educational development among junior secondary students. It was proven that, there was causal relationship between family stability and educational development of junior secondary school students. The factors were mainly due to monitoring, supervision, involvement, and attachment among others which may also play a role in determining why adolescents turn to juvenile delinquents. This research study concludes that high level of a family stability to a large extent has more influence on their children's educational development. This assertion has been supported that committed parents in a stable family usually show interest and care in the educational development of their children.

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