

Parenting Factors and Recidivism among Delinquents in Juvenile Institution in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

There is a general agreement that children are source of hope in society. They are future leaders and foremost social capital requiring priority investment. However, these seem unrealistic as Nigeria's children are growing up in a world that is largely different from that of the previous generations, as their delinquent behavior manifested through various forms which include bullying, fighting, running away from home or school, truancy to mention but a few. No doubt, this has become a great source of concerns to all well-meaning Nigerians. Thus, this study seeks to examine the influence of parenting factors on recidivistic behavior among adolescents. The study was conducted in juvenile (Borstal) institution, Kwara state. Data were gathered through questionnaire administration. A total of 205 respondents were sampled using simple random technique. Frequency distribution and percentile methods were used to descriptively analyze the data; while Chi-square technique was used to test the formulated hypotheses. The analysis of data revealed that parenting discipline styles, such as authoritarian one contributes to juvenile recidivism. The study also revealed that parents, who engaged in the act smoking / alcoholism, fight or abuse each other particularly in the presence of their children likely to have their wards become delinquent. Based on the above findings, it was recommended that parents need to be more informed and enlighten about the effective ways and manners of rearing children. Parents equally need to be a good role model to their children.

Key words: Parenting factors, parental criminality, recidivism, delinquency, adolescent.

Introduction

Africa's adolescents constitute up to 40% of the population of Africa. They constitute the largest segment of Africa's population, and Nigeria is not an exception. They are a formidable and creative force that can be harnessed for the country's socio-economic development; they are country's future leaders and foremost social capital requiring priority investment (Adegoke,

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2009). However, these appear unrealistic as Nigeria's children are growing up in a world that is largely different from that of the previous generations. Indeed, the bewildering and most eventful time to be an adolescent in Nigeria is now. Many children in Nigeria are daily confronted with pressures to indulge in various anti-social behaviour such as use of alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs and to initiate sexual relationships at earlier ages, putting themselves at high risk for intentional and unintentional injuries, unintended pregnancies, and infection from sexually transmitted diseases, including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Many experience a wide range of painful and debilitating mental health problems (Adegoke & Araoye, 1996; Adedoyin & Adegoke, 1995; Adelekan *et. al*, 2001).

Recidivism, therefore, is a major concern in the global society today, affecting the society, governments, multinational humanitarian organizations and the world over. Juvenile criminal activity continues to be a problem in the society both in terms of its financial burden to society and its impact on quality of life. Although adult offenders account for the majority of criminal activity in the society, about 25 percent of juvenile offenders over the age of 16 will go on to re-offend in their early adult years (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2006). A 1998 study estimated the cost to society for just one juvenile repeat offender at 1.3 to 1.5 million dollars (Cohen, 1998). These figures include the cost to the victim, loss in productivity of the offender, and criminal justice, drug treatment, and medical expenses. In contemporary societies, arrests of adolescent delinquents and underage offenders increased by an average of 50 percent between the mid- 1980s and the late 1990s (World Youth Report, 2003). Adolescents' crime levels in many countries in Eastern Europe and the commonwealth of independent States have increase by more than 30 percent with many of such offences relating to drug abuse, school violence and excessive alcohol use (World Youth Report, 2003).

Africa is not an exception regarding the global aspect of adolescent delinquency. Wu *et. al* (1998), acknowledge that involvement of adolescents in delinquent activities is on the increase in Nigeria and that the last two decades have witnessed crimes ranging from minor stealing to major robbery and killing perpetuated by teenagers. The authors further argue that there has been increasing concerns of the Police and the general public on the seriousness of adolescent crime and conduct problems in Nigeria. They reported that delinquency rates rose from 367 to 538 per 100,000 between 1986 and 1996 and claimed that most offenders arrested in 1996 were arrested for petty crimes, such as theft, with 38 percent arrested for shoplifting and 18 percent for simple theft.

A number of adverse conditions have placed children at high risk; these include persistent and worsening poverty, an alarming pace of economic change, rapid population growth, increasing urbanization, the devastating scourge of HIV/AIDS, a changing family structure (Colleta, Balachander, & Liang 1996). Most importantly, the decline of the extended family systems and the massive rural urban drift on the African continent and Nigeria have all converged to create roadblocks in the journey from childhood to adulthood (McWhirter, et al, 1998; Adegoke, 2001). According to Scholte (1992), there are three factors that are associated with the development of delinquent behaviors in adolescents; the family, peers and school. Families are one of the strongest socializing forces in life. They teach children to control unacceptable behavior, to delay gratification, and to respect the rights of others. Conversely, families can teach children aggressive, antisocial, and violent behavior (Scholte 1992).

Family structure has changed dramatically over the last few decades in our contemporary societies. Nigeria is no exception as high rates of divorce, increases in female headed households, increasing rates of teenage pregnancy, rising rates of working mothers, the propagation of step families and non-parents families, and an explosion in cohabitation have come to characterize contemporary Nigerian family system. Many criminologists like Canter (1982), Wu (1996), Cookston (1999), Demuth and Brown (2004), Franke (2000); Griffin et al (2000), Mackey and Coney (2000), manning and Lamb (2003), O'Brien and Stockard (2003); Osgood and Chambers (2000) and Rebellion (2002) have demonstrated that these emerging family patterns can be destructive to children's well-being and family functioning, and have the potential to contribute to juvenile offend and re-offend.

Statement of the Problem

It has being observed that the bewildering and most eventful time to be an adolescent in the world is now. While this statement probably applies to 21st Century adolescents everywhere in the world, it has an especially poignant flavor in Nigeria as the rate of recidivism among the adolescents in the country continue to increase. Recidivism has increasingly becoming a formidable social problem which not only causes a major distress and damage to victims but also perpetrators and the society at large. Chronic and violent juvenile offences are associated with adverse health, educational, vocational and interpersonal consequences with repercussions in adulthood (Bordium & Schaeffer, 1998; Ajiboye, Yussuf, Issa, Adegunloye, & Buhari, 2009). Princeton Survey Research Associates cited in World Youth Report (2003) shown that adolescent who are commonly viewed as a source of hope, can also be viewed as a threat in

society as their behavior delinquency manifested through various form which include bullying, fighting, running away from home or school, truancy to mention but a few and that it affects a lot of progress in society. According to Iwarimie-Jaja (2007), the upsurge in recidivism among juveniles has being admitted by many well meaning Nigerians as alarming. The Nigerian Prison Service Annual Report in 2013 also indicated that an average daily lock-up of 157 juvenile offenders (Animashaun and Animashaun, 2014).

In Kwara state, Nigeria, the consumption of alcohol among children has indicated an overwhelming surge in juvenile violent crime in the state (The Herald Newspapers, 2013). Underage smoking / drinking has been found to be capable of impairing children's physical, emotional, and neurological Health which can cause them to make irresponsible decisions, encounter memory lapses, or process and send neural impulses more slowly. Marijuana intake for instance constitutes a predisposing factor for indulging in stealing, bullying, cruelty, vandalism and risky sexual behavior. Children who take this (marijuana) are more likely to engage in unsafe sexual intercourse, have sexual experiences at an earlier age, have sex with multiple partners, engage in raping, experience unexpected pregnancies, contract sexually transmitted diseases (STD). for instance, In a cross sectional study on anti-social behavior among juvenile involving eight hundred and twenty -six female adolescents aged between 11 and 20 years in Ilorin. 46.7% of them had experienced sexual intercourse, 34 % of delinquents that had experienced sexual intercourse had no knowledge of whether the use of condom could prevent STD, the youngest age at first sexual intercourse was 11 years (Aboyeji, Adegoke, & Adebisi, 2004a).

Lastly, the high prevalence of recidivism among the delinquent juveniles in Nigeria has both consequences and implications for social and economic growth and development. According to Siegel (1995), teenage criminals may graduate into adult criminals if not properly checked and curtailed. This is capable of resulting into loss of lives and property there by threatening peace, safety of lives and national cohesion, and by extension this can make the country unsafe for economic and commercial activities for both local and foreign investors, sometimes forcing them to relocate to safer countries. With such development, the country may lose billions of Naira which would have been invested for developmental projects that could benefit the Nigerian citizenry.

From the foregoing problems, it is quite clear that juvenile recidivism is a threat to any human society attracting research attention. While a multiplicity of factors contribute to its development, family factors have been shown to be powerful, strong and consistent determinants (Goldstein

and Heaven, 2000). While a lots of studies have been carried out on recidivism among adult offenders or criminals, not much have been done on juvenile recidivism to the best of my knowledge, especially in Nigeria.

In view of the above situation, a study to examine the factors accounting for these problems was deemed necessary. Therefore, the fundamental objective of this study was to examine the effects of some parental factors on juvenile recidivism among delinquents in Borstal Institute, Kwara State Nigeria.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Borstal (Better orientation, reformation, and social training for acceptable life) Institution in Kwara State, Nigeria, which is a male juvenile detention institution in the country. A total of 220 inmates participated in this study. Permission was sought from the authorities of the Juvenile institution, who approved the use of the designed questionnaires. Consent was also sought from the participants; with the assurance of anonymity and freedom of choice to or not to participate in the study. Data were collected with the use of questionnaires out of which a total of 205 returned were validly filled out. Data were presented in form of frequency distribution and percentile methods, while Chi-square was used to test hypotheses formulated for this study.

The formulated hypothesis for this study states:

- H₁ There is significant relationship between parenting style and juvenile recidivism
- H₀ There is no significant relationship between parenting style and juvenile recidivism

Results

Table 1: Demographic Variables of the Respondents.

Variables	No of Respondents	Percentage
Age of respondents (in years)		
12-14	55	27
15-17	88	43
18-19	62	30
Total	205	100
Marital status of parents		
Married	71	35
Never Married	31	15
Mother deceased	16	8
Father deceased	19	9
Both parent deceased	20	10
Divorce or separated but still alive	48	23
Total	205	100
Guardian of respondents		
Both mother and father	61	30
Father only	15	7
Mother only	48	23
Step mother and father	8	4
Grandparents	39	19
Neighbor	5	2
Uncle and aunt	3	1
Nobody	26	13
Total	205	100
Respondents' family of orientation structure		
Two-parent family structure	141	69
One- parent family structure	64	31
Total	205	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2015

The table 1 above shows that 27 % (55) of the respondents were between the of 12-14 years, while 43 % (88) were between the age of 16-17, while 30% (62) fell within the age of 18-19 years. This implies that the age brackets 16-17 years are the major delinquents in the centre.

The table also shows that 35% (71) of the respondents' parents were legally married. 15% (31) were not married, meaning that they gave birth outside wed lock. 8% (16) of the respondents have lost their mothers, 9% (19) of the respondents have lost their fathers; 10% (20) of the respondents have lost both their fathers and mothers while 23% (48) of the respondents' parents have parted ways but they are still alive. The majority of the respondents' parents were married. This supports the findings of Fawole and Awoniyi (2011) which posited that even in a married family, children can become delinquent if the monitoring and supervision are lacking.

A total 30% (61) of the respondents were leaving with their both parents; 7% (15) of the respondents were living with their father only; 23% (48) were living with their mother only; 4% (8) of the respondents were living with their step mothers and fathers; 19% (39) were living with their grandparents, 2% (5) were living with their neighbor; 1% (3) of the respondents were living with their uncle and aunty and 13% (26) were living with nobody. Also, 69% (141) of the respondents said to have been raised by their two parents while 31% (64) said to have been raised by one parent.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Parental Factors

Variables	No of Respondents	Percentage
Parenting Discipline Style		
My parents hit me with a stick or other object	82	40
My parents warm me verbally	32	16
My parents overlook my delinquent behavior	41	20
My parents deny me food	50	24
Total	205	100
Parental anti-social behavior		
My parents smoke / take alcohol	76	37
My parents used to fight each other	52	25
My parents have been convicted before	27	13
My parents used to abuse each other	43	21
None of the above	7	3
Total	205	100
Parents-Child relationship		

My parents spend time with me	32	16
My parents play games and have other fun with me	54	26
My parents hug/kiss me when I do something well	47	23
My parents are not approachable	72	35
Total	205	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2015.

The table 2 above shows that 40% (82) of the respondents reported that their parent used to hit them with a stick or other object for their delinquent behavior; 16% (32) of the respondents were used to be verbally warned by their parents; 20% (41) of the respondents reported that their parents used to overlook their delinquents behavior; while 24% (50) of the respondents were used to be denied food by their parents as a way of punishing them. Evidently, the majority of the respondents were used to severely beat but yet not desist from delinquents' behavior. This agrees with the position of McCord (1997a) which pointed that severe discipline style such as corporal punishment is one of the major risk factor of juvenile delinquency.

The table also shows that; 37% (76) of the respondents' parents either smoke or take alcohol or combination of the both; 25% (52) of respondents' parents used to fight each other. The knowledge of this immoral act by respondents reveals that their parents do so in the presence of the respondents; 13% (27) of the respondents parents used to abuse each other; while 21% (43) of the respondents' parents have been convicted one time or the other and 3% (7) of the respondents' parents have never participated in any of these immoral acts. As majority of the respondents reported that their parents smoke or take alcohol. By implication, this might be the cause of their delinquent behavior. Again, this underpinned the theoretical assumption of social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1977), Parents who engage in criminality would inculcate negative or anti-social values in the children, which signify weak and negative means of social control. As regards to parent-child relationship, 16% (32) of the respondents reported that their parents spend time with them; 26% (54) of the respondents' parents play games and have other fun with them; 23% (47) of the respondents were usually hug/kiss when they do something well; while 35% of the respondents' parents are not approachable.

Table 3: Juvenile Offences

Variables	No of Respondent	Percentage
Most consistent reason for being committed		

Stealing	63	31
Disobedience	32	16
Running away from home	45	22
Smoking and taken alcohol	46	22
Others	19	9
Total	205	100
Number of times committed in the last 3 years		
2	164	80
3	21	10
4	17	8
5	3	2
Total	205	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2015.

The table 3 above was on the most consistent delinquent behavior for which the juvenile had been committed to the institution the most, as well as the frequency of their being committed within three years. It was revealed that 31% (63) of the respondents' repeatedly committed stealing offence; 16% (32) of the respondents engaged in the act of disobedience; 22% (45) of the respondents perpetually ran away from home; 22% (46) of the respondents engaged in the act of the smoking / alcoholism while 9% (19) of respondents engaged in other criminal acts. A total of 80% (164) of the respondents admitted that they had been committed to the juvenile institution on two separate occasions; 10% (21) of the respondents had been committed there three times; 8% (17) of the respondents had been there four times, while 2% (5) had been there five times, all in the last five years.

Table 4: Cross tabulation on the relationship between the parenting style and juvenile recidivism.

Number of times having been committed to the institution in 5 years	Parenting Discipline style				
	Hit me with a stick	Warn me verbally	Overlook my delinquent behavior	Deny me food	Total
2	68	22	33	41	164

3	8	3	4	6	21
4	6	5	3	3	17
5	1	2	0	0	3
Total	82	32	41	50	205

X²c= 22.76; alpha level=0.05; df = 9; X²t=21.05 Ho rejected

Discussion of Findings

The tested hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between parenting style and juvenile recidivism. According to James Alexander and Thomas Sexton, family disruption and poor parental supervision do impact juvenile recidivism. They found in their test of this theory that household crowding, family instability, and low socioeconomic status, influenced the informal social control of the family, resulting in delinquent behavior by adolescents. It was also found that 73 percent of risk factors that led to delinquency were mediated by factors of parental discipline and parental supervision. Conversely, the study showed that parental rejection, hostility toward adolescents, poor communication, and ineffective supervision of children were found to be significant risk factors associated with delinquent behavior by adolescents.

This also agrees with the similar work of Fawole and Awoniyi (2011) who pointed out that parents that are authoritarian in handling their wards are likely to have such children becoming delinquent. For instance, 40 % of the respondents who are often hit with a stick or other object by their parents repeatedly commit the offences that they were being punished for. The finding also align with (McCord, 1997a) which opined that severe discipline style such as corporal punishment is one of the major risk factor of juvenile delinquency. This implies the inadequacy of this approach (severe discipline style) to restrain curb juvenile criminality. Additionally, researchers showed that a lack of parental supervision may also serve a dual role in determining youth involvement in delinquent behavior and recidivism. The dual role consists of family mismanagement practices and the negative impact it has on children. They referred to family mismanagement as “disrupters” to effective parenting skills that promoted negative behavior in children. According to David Huh, Jennifer Tristan, Emily Wade and Eric Stice, “disrupters” are factors that influence parental behaviors and traits that become susceptible to stressors such as marital conflict, divorce and unemployment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Family is the first institution of children’s socialization and one of the most influential agents, determining the formation of a personality. The family transmits social values, improves morality and proper behavior. However, the study has shown that the contemporary family forms are characterized

by weak parental monitoring and supervision, inconsistent parental discipline styles, single-parent household, lack or inadequate religious training at home, and the likes. Without mincing words, these are the symptoms of dysfunctionality in our contemporary family system, which accounted for the high rate of juvenile delinquency in our society. Authoritarian parenting style is the commonest method among parents in Nigeria and this has implication for delinquent behavior among adolescents. Adolescents who are under the authoritarian style of parenting express angry feelings towards their parents than the adolescents under other method. Parents that are authoritarian in handling their wards are likely to have such children becoming delinquent. Where the adolescent were not given adequate attention or listening hear by their parents, there is tendency of such adolescent to become delinquent. Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- (1) Parents need to be more informed and enlighten about the effective ways and style of discipline. This is because severe discipline style such as corporal punishment is one of the major risk factor of juvenile delinquency. Also, the interventionists can also target the stakeholders in educational sector and remind them of the negative consequences that corporal punishment can have on the life of school children.
- (2) Secondly, parents need to be sensitized on the need to be actively involved in the lives of their wards, particularly as its affects friends they keep. This is because bad company has been found to be one of the influencing factors of juvenile delinquency.
- (3) Thirdly, parents need to be made aware that children at early stage are tabula rasa (clean slate) and whatever behavior and attitude they observe from them that they put into practice. Thus, they need to be a good role model to their children. This will go along ways in curbing delinquent act among the adolescents.

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