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PARENTS AS RISK FACTOR FOR DELINQUENCY

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Abstract

This paper reports an empirical investigation on the issue of parents as risk factor in delinquency. It adopts survey to collect data using questionnaire from subjects which comprised of 80 students drawn from a secondary school in Ilorin, Kwara State. Findings from the study shows that there is no significant difference between family size and delinquent behavior; there is a significant difference between relationship with father and delinquent behavior and there is significant difference between relationship with mother and delinquent behavior. The study recommends that parents should among others, be made aware of the necessity to be involved a lot more in the lives of their children, particularly as it affects friends and academics, be enlightened on the hazards involved in not controlling the excesses of their adolescent children, enlightened on the need to always be readily available for their adolescent children and learn to listen to their problems, handling them with caution and affection, while teachers and educational counselors, in their professions, should also endeavour to instil moral behaviour and discipline in the lives of the adolescents.

Keywords: Parents; Delinquency; Risk Factor; Children; Family.

Introduction

The family serves as a natural support system and a barrier against outside forces attempting to negatively influence children. Various reasons such as poor marriages, lack of parental control, ineffective parental behaviour low self esteem among adolescents and failure to provide a natural and loving environment have been attributed to the rise in delinquency (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987).

The majority of societies consider persons under the age of 18 to be juveniles. However, when children under this age commit serious crimes, for

example, murder, they may be prosecuted as adults. Tolan and Loeber (1993) define juvenile crime as a term denoting various offenses committed by children or youths under the age of 18. Such acts are sometimes referred to as juvenile delinquency.

It has been observed in many families in Nigeria that much aggressive behaviours in children are influenced by the manner of parents' behaviour towards their children (Odebunmi, 1992). In many homes with antisocial children, the parents do little to encourage polite or considerate behaviour by the child, which are often ignored and rendered ineffective. Whenever parents fail to maintain a systematic communication pattern between them and their children, it leads to emotional disturbance and distrust (Okorodudu and Okorodudu, 2003).

The family setting with poor parenting styles has been found to promote a significantly higher amount of delinquent acts in children than the family setting with effective parenting styles (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, and Carrano, 2006). Both male and female children from family settings with poor parent-child relationship were found to be prone to delinquency. For instance, Male children from a home with strained father - child relationship have been associated with delinquency issues related to incorrigibility and sexual deviancy. From such family settings, male children have been found to also be involved in higher rates of alcohol, drug usage and promiscuity. Children from homes where the parents are indifferent or neglectful have been found to be two or three times likely to have emotional and behavioural problems, when compared to children from warm, loving homes (Popenoe, 1995). The strong emotional bond that develops between children and their parents is known as attachment, and it is considered to be the corner stone for all other relationship in a child's life.

Bronte-Tinkew, Moore and Carrano (2006) explained the effects of each parenting style on the adolescents. Adolescents with authoritarian parents tend to be withdrawn, moody, obedient, and fearful of new situation and have low self esteem. They also have trouble socializing with others. Adolescents with permissive parents tend to be more creative, but are behaviorally and verbally impulsive, aggressive and have trouble dealing with school imposed limits. They also believe that their parents do not care about them, or how they behave. Those with authoritative parents are most likely to foster a positive development they have high self-esteem are socially confident, inquisitive, highly assured and self-reliant. They also have high respect for their parents. Adolescents with neglectful parents are in the

most danger of engaging in deviant behaviour. Drug and alcohol use is extremely high in adolescents who were raised by neglectful parents.

Both authoritarian and authoritative parents provide strong models, but in different ways. While authoritarian parents attempt to control their children, authoritative ones tend to guide them. In line with this difference, the latter place greater value on autonomy and self discipline and the former on obedience and respect for authority. Both types of parents define limits and set standards. Authoritative parents, however, are more willing to listen to reasons and arguments, tending to draw the line around issues rather than set absolute standards.

Authoritative parenting carries advantages, which persist into adolescence. Adolescent raised in authoritative families show fewer signs of psychological distress, such as anxiety or depression and fewer problem behaviour such as truancy or the use of drugs (Schorr, 1997) such adolescents are more socially competent more self-reliant and have a better work ethic. Verlaan and Schwartzman, (2002) found that adolescent reared by authoritarian parents also do well in school but were less self-reliant. Also, they had behaviour problems.

Steinberg, Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) studied adolescents raised by permissive or indulgent parents. They found that these adolescents are well adjusted and socially competent. However, forms of misconducts, such as truancy, defiance etc. increased. Adolescents raised by neglected parents showed poorer orientation towards work and significantly more problem behaviour. McCord (1991) discovered that the absence of parental supervision and discipline often is due simply to a lack of parenting skill, particularly of the parents who were not supervised properly by their own parents. He states that in order for the parent to teach the child not to use force or fraud, the parent must monitor the child's behaviour; recognize deviant behaviour when it occurs; and punish such behaviour. Poor parent - child relationship including lack of parental bonding and early insecure attachment, of the child by the parents, including cold and unsupportive maternal behaviour, lack of involvement and time together, resulting in rejection of the parents by the child could predispose a child to become delinquent (Cole & Zahn-Waxler, 1992).

While parental monitoring and supervision are good for children, harsh or excessive discipline has just the opposite effect. Quay (1993), in his study found that the parents of delinquents are harsher than ordinary parents in punishing their children; and depressed, stressed, hostile parents more likely will vent their anger on their more aggressive children. For these

children, harsh punishment can mean parental rejection. He concludes that punishment that is too strict, frequent or severe can lead to a greater probability of delinquency regardless of parental attachments.

As a child's emotional attachment to his or her parents ensures a well-adjusted adult, parental rejection of the child has powerful opposite effects. Such rejecting parents not only fail to model and reinforce pro-social behaviour, they actually provide training in aggressive noncompliance behaviour. Parental rejection increases the probability of a youth's involvement in a deviant peer group, reliance upon an avoidant coping style and use of substances.

Parents and peers are the strongest risk factors for delinquency (Kumpfer and Turner, 1991). In other words, youths who like and respect their traditional parents are less likely to become involved with antisocial peers and delinquency. Wright and Wright (1995), provided a list of family correlates of delinquency based on functional family risk theory:

- (a) Family history of the behaviour problem, including parents' or siblings' role modeling of antisocial values and behaviour as well as favourable attitudes about antisocial behaviour, and parental criminality, poor socialization practices, including failure to promote positive moral development; and neglect in teaching life, social, and academic skills to the child.
- (b) Poor supervision of the child, including failure to monitor the child's activities, neglect, sibling supervision, and too few adults to care for the number of children.
- (c) Poor discipline skills, including lax, inconsistent, or excessive discipline, expectations which are unrealistic for the development level of the child and excessive, unrealistic demands or harsh physical punishment.
- (d) Poor parent - child relationship including lack of parental bonding and early insecure attachment, negativity and rejection of the child by the parents, lack of involvement and time together resulting in rejection of the parents by the child, and maladaptive parent - child interactions.
- (e) Family disorganization, where chaos and stress often because of poor family management skills, life skills or poverty.
- (f) Differential family acculturation and role reversal or loss of parental control over adolescents by parents who are less acculturated than their children.

Difficult to parent children with early emotional/physical problems are more likely to turn into difficult to manage teenagers who in turn are more likely to behave anti-socially and criminally. It must be acknowledged

that style of parenting is just as likely to be a reaction to persistent pattern of difficult behaviour as the cause of it (Harris, 1998).

The family has the primary responsibility to instill moral values and provide guidance and support for children. The dynamics of this relationship and the concomitant effects are motivation to undertake a study of this sort.

Justification of the Study

There is a general feeling that strong parent child relationships are necessary for proper development of the child. The family has the primary responsibility to instill moral values and provide guidance and support for children. The dynamics of this relationship and the concomitant effects are motivation to undertake a study of this sort.

- This study is relevant in our environment where there is the need for a database on family relationships on the developing child.
- This study is also intended to supply data which would enable counsellors, parents and teachers to know the types of relationships that exist between the parents and the children and the effects these relationship have on the development of the adolescent.
- This study also contributes to sociological understanding of juvenile delinquency in general and parenting styles in particular. Substantial studies abound in delinquency and factors predisposing youths to delinquency.
- The Federal Government too can benefit from a study of this sort. It is hoped that the results of this study will help the Federal Government to put into place counselling centres for the family, while encouraging Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to do likewise.

Methodology

Study Population

The population under study included the students from Government Day Secondary School Tanke in Ilorin, Nigeria. The study covered all students in the final year in these schools, with an estimated total population of 150 students as at 2010. From the entire population of students, eighty (80) students were selected as our sample elements.

Research Instrument

The data for this study was obtained basically through questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A contained demographic data of respondents. Section B dealt with gender factors and juvenile delinquency. The questions were both close ended and open-ended in nature.

Method of Data Analysis

The methods of data presentation and analyses for the work were descriptive; which was both descriptive and inferential method of analysis. The analysis was presented in frequency counts and simple percentage as well as chi-square analysis by use of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis (I)

H₀: That there is no significant difference between family type and delinquent Behaviour.

H_i: That there is significant difference between family type and delinquent behavior.

Table 1: Cross Tabulation of Family Type and Delinquent Behaviours

Delinquent Behaviours	Family Type			Total
	one wife	two wives	three wives	
Impersonation	4	0	1	5
perpetual lying	2	2	1	5
Stealing	2	3	0	5
Truancy/lateness to school	3	2	0	5
fighting siblings/friends	3	1	1	5
alcohol intake	5	0	0	5
cheating in exams	3	1	1	5
bullying students	2	2	1	5
leaving school without permission	2	2	1	5
Forgery	4	1	0	5
running away from home	4	1	0	5
internet fraud	4	0	1	5
possession of pornographic materials	2	1	1	4
drug abuse/smoking	2	2	0	4
gang related behaviours	4	0	0	4
being violent with parents	4	0	0	4
sex related behaviours	3	1	0	4
Total	53	19	8	80

$X^2 = 43.77$; $n=80$; $d.f.= 32$; $H_0 = \text{Accepted}$

Hypothesis II

H_0 : That there is no significant difference between Father-Child relationship and Delinquent Behaviour

H_1 : That there is a significant difference between Father-Child relationship and Delinquent Behaviour

Table 2: Cross Tabulation of Father-Child relationship and Delinquent Behaviour

Delinquent Behaviour	Relationship With Father				Total
	Positive	Positive but not very open	Somewhat positive and somewhat open	Negative	
Impersonation	2	0	3	0	5
perpetual lying	0	2	1	2	5
Stealing	1	2	1	1	5
Truancy/lateness to school	3	1	1	0	5
Fighting siblings/friends	1	2	2	0	5
alcohol intake	3	2	0	0	5
Cheating in exams	3	1	1	0	5
Bullying students	2	2	1	0	5
leaving school without permission	4	0	0	1	5
Forgery	2	3	0	0	5
Running away from home	5	0	0	0	5
internet fraud	3	1	1	0	5
possession of pornographic materials	2	1	1	0	4
drug abuse/smoking	3	0	0	1	4
gang related behaviours	2	0	2	0	4
being violent with parents	1	2	1	0	4
sex related behaviours	2	1	1	0	4
Total	39	20	16	5	80

$X^2 = 51.16$; $n=80$; $d.f.= 32$; H_0 = rejected

Hypothesis III

H₀: That there is no significant difference between Mother-Child relationship and Delinquent Behaviour

H₁: That there is a significant difference between Mother-Child relationship and Delinquent Behaviour

Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Mother-Child relationship and Delinquent Behaviour

Delinquent Behaviour	Relationship With Mother				Total
	Positive	Positive but not open	Somewhat positive and somewhat open	Negative	
Impersonation	3	2	0	0	5
perpetual lying	3	2	0	0	5
Stealing	2	1	0	2	5
Truancy/lateness to school	3	2	0	0	5
Fighting siblings/friends	3	1	1	0	5
alcohol intake	3	1	1	0	5
Cheating in exams	5	0	0	0	5
Bullying students	4	1	0	0	5
leaving school without permission	4	1	0	0	5
Forgery	4	1	0	0	5
Running away from home	5	0	0	0	5
internet fraud	3	2	0	0	5
possession of pornographic materials	2	1	1	0	4
drug abuse/smoking	2	2	0	0	4
gang related behaviours	3	0	1	0	4
being violent with parents	3	1	0	0	4
sex related behaviours	3	1	0	0	4
Total	55	19	4	2	80

$X^2 = 54.0$; $n=80$; $d.f.= 32$; H_0 = rejected

Discussion

The results of the three hypotheses formulated revealed the following results. Firstly, there is no significant difference between family size and

delinquent behaviour. This finding is in agreement with the work of Omisakin (1998), who pointed out that the increasing crime trend among children in Nigeria may be attributed in considerable degree to the declining authority of the family and the neighbourhood. Coie and Watt (1993) found that single parent families, and in particular mother-only families, produce more delinquent children than two parent families.

Secondly, there is a significant difference between relationship with father and delinquent behaviour. According to Walklate (2003), a lack of supervision, especially by fathers, is connected to poor relationships between children and parents, as children who are often in conflict with their parents may be less willing to discuss their activities with them. Children with a weak attachment to their parents are more likely to offend.

Thirdly, there is significant difference between relationship with mother and delinquent behaviour. Coie and Watt (1993) also asserted that there is a substantial biological element causing delinquency. They argued that some people are born with a predisposition toward crime. Children potential for delinquency is more likely to be realised if they are not properly socialized by both parents. Their research shows that single parent families, and in particular mother-only families, produce more delinquent children than two parent families. Indeed the very absence of intact families makes gang membership more appealing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Authoritarian parenting is the most dominant style of parenting in the Nigerian society and this has implications for delinquent behaviour among adolescents. Adolescents who were under the authoritarian style of parenting expressed angry feelings towards their parents than adolescents under any of the other styles of parenting. Parents that are authoritarian in handling their adolescent children are likely to have such adolescents becoming delinquent. Where the adolescents were not given adequate attention by their parents, such adolescents became delinquent. This was exhibited by parents who adopted the permissive parenting style on their children. When such children are allowed to take their own decisions, to do whatever pleases them without the control or monitoring of their parents, they are likely to become delinquent.

The following recommendations are made from the results of this study:

Firstly, further studies can also be carried out to assist parents in enlightening them about the most effective ways to parent or handle adolescents, especially when they are delinquent.

Secondly, parents ought to be made aware of the necessity to be involved a lot more in the lives of their children, particularly as it affect friends and academics.

Thirdly, parents should be enlightened on the hazards involved in not controlling the excesses of their adolescent children.

Fourthly, parents should be enlightened on the need to always be readily available for their adolescent children and learn to listen to their problems, handling them with caution and affection.

Fifthly, teachers and educational counselors, in their professions, should also endeavour to instill moral behaviour and discipline in the lives of the adolescents.

Finally, programmes should be organized to assist parents to develop interest in finding time to play and have good times together with their children. For instance, it is essential for fathers to interact meaningfully with all children from time to time. They can play games such as table tennis, indoor games, lawn football, etc.

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Abstract

This study explores the management knowledge and attitude of parents of sickle cell disease (SCD) patients towards the preventive measures of sickle cell crisis. The objective is to establish baseline data and to identify the findings in designing interventions that would assist the sickle cell patients to prevent the sickle cell crisis. A convenient sample of 100 adult sickle cell patients from a tertiary health facility was used to assess the subjects' knowledge and attitude towards the preventive measures of sickle cell crisis. The results indicated that the sample was moderately knowledgeable about the sickle cell preventive measures (mean of knowledge score = 5.5) and moderately compliant (mean of attitude score = 5.5). The subjects' knowledge (about the preventive measures) was found to be moderately and positively correlated ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) with their attitude towards sickle cell crisis prevention. The study also revealed that the subjects' knowledge of sickle cell crisis is an essential factor in designing interventions for these patients.

2. What is the attitude of sickle cell disease patients towards SCD crisis

Keywords: Sickle cell disease, Knowledge, Attitude, Preventive measures

3. What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude towards SCD crisis

4. What is the relationship between knowledge and attitude towards SCD crisis